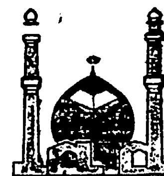
Hindu-Muslim Relations in BENGAL

(MEDIEVAL PERIOD)

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TO
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PRFFACE

The following pages represent a free English rendering of two lectures delivered by me in Bengali in July, 1980 in the *Bongiya Sahitya Parishat*, Calcutta, in the series Ramlal-Haripriya Lectures, endowed by Sri Jogilal Haldar in memory of his deceased parents. The Bengali version has been published in the Parishat's Journal (Patrika) for 1388 B.S. Part I. It has also been published separately as a monograph. Since the lectures were acclaimed by the audience assembled on the two days, I translated these myself, in the fond hope that the subject matter might as well be of interest to the English—knowing public.

This is a little-known but highly controversial subject. An attempt has been made to write it dispassionately. It must, however, be said that there are still many gaps which remain to be filled up.

I am thankful to Professor Dilip Kumar Biswas, formerly Professor and Head of Department of History, Sanskrit College, Calcutta (now retired) and the then General Secretary of the Bongiya Sahitya Parishat and now its Vice-President for asking me to deliver the lectures. My grateful thanks are also due to Professor Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharyya for lending to me the printed files of *Banglar Vaishnava Bhavapanna Muslman Kavir Padamanjusha* which is yet to be published by the Calcutta University, and to Dr. Richard M. Eaton, Chairman of History

Department, Arizona University, U.S.A., for kindly discussing the subject of the entire MS. after perusal in 1981, and agreeing with the general trend of my arguments. To Professor S.H. Askari (now retired) of Patna University, who read the MS. through and through and made some valuable suggestions for improvement, I am deeply beholden. I have also to thank my young friend Dr. Somnath Roy, Reader in History; The University of Burdwan, for some valuable help in translation of a portion of my *Islam in Bengal* into Bengali. The printing of the English version has been delayed on account of circumstances beyond my control. Diacritical marks have not generally been used except in a few cases. I am deeply conscious of the limitations of the work. I also crave the indulgence of the readers for printing mistakes that have unfortunately crept into the volume. My thanks are due to Mr. Muhammad Ahmad, of Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi-6 for kindly undertaking the publication and to Modern Printers, for printing it nicely and expeditiously.

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J. N. Sarkar

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Introductory

In our country the task of writing social history is a difficult one. One feels the lack of adequate source materials almost at every step. True, the attention of scholars has been drawn to this subject. In dealing with social history a writer usually discusses the social conditions, dress, ornaments, food, recreations, sports, growth of education and position of women and such matters. These are, no doubt, important. But society is not static. Age after age society changes with changes in the impact of the environmental factors, of the events in the internal and inter-national set-up and various other reasons, at first slowly, imperceptibly to all; but if the time of discussion is extended, the extent of the change would easily be apparent. Hence any discussion of social history must never be static, confined to a narrow limit of time, but diachronic, spread over a pretty long period. In accordance with this principle, I will endeavour, to throw some light on the little-known and controversial subject of communal relations in medieval Bengal. The connotation of Bengal here is not the partitioned Bengal of to-day but the geographical Vanga-desa where the people speak the Bengali Language.

It is a platitude to say that in social history no fixed dates can be assigned. But for the sake of convenience we will discuss Hindu-Muslim relations from the Muslim conquest of Nadia of Lakshmanasena to the British victory at Plassey over Sirajuddaulah i.e. roughly from the beginning of 13th century to middle of 18th century i.e. approximately 550 years. But since even with the transition in ages, the momentum in social evolution is never completely blocked, we have, in a few fields, to include the end of the 18th century, too, within the gamut of our discussion.

In our country the state is society-based but the concept of social history has evolved after that of political history and quite independently of it, and is also more difficult. That is way political history has been written long before that of social history. Contemporary Muslim historians have left narratives of victories achieved by sultans and emperors, *wazirs* and *amirs*. The succeeding British historians toed this line and wrote political history.

A little more than a century ago Bankim Chandra had realised that "...........histories composed by Englishmen are not true histories of Bengal and of the Bengalis...." He strongly warned, "what is required is history of Bengal, otherwise there is no hope for Bengal. Who would write it? You will write. I will write, all will write. Come, let us combine in writing the history of Bengal".[1]

His historical novels constituted a gigantic effort to popularise history. But history-writing is not easy. Even Indian historians of the 20th century have followed the path traversed by the English.

Medieval Bengal had no authoritative, continuous contemporary history,—whether political or social. In the field of politics there are only occasional references to Bengal in the contemporary histories of Delhi empire. Only a noble named

1. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, 'Banglar Itihas Sambandhe Kayekti Katha', *Bangadarshan*, Agrahayan, 1287; 'Bange Brāhmanādhikār', *Ibid.* Bhadra, 1280; 'Bangalir Bāhubal', *ibid.* Sravan, 1281.

Mirza Nathan, has referred to the regional history of Bengal in his own memoirs, entitled *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibi*, while dealing with the expansion of the Mughal empire in Bengal, Kamrup and Assam. Sir Jadunath Sarkar compared it to 'an oasis in the desert of historical ignorance.[2] In the complete histories written during the subsequent Mughal age we get a few references to Bengal. Only three foreign scholars, Ibn Battuta, Abdul Latif and Mulla Taqia have left not very long accounts of Bengal. The ideal of social history was not conceived among contemporary official and non-official historians.[3] Immediately after the British occupation of the land, the British administrators sought to collect all relevant details regarding it. For it is extremely necessary to know as early as possible, all knowable things like the geographical, historical, political, social and economic conditions as well as the psychology of the people.[4] Since then more than two hundred years have rolled by. The country has passed through a transition of ages. The connotation of 'History' also has changed. Several historical works on Bengal have been written since Salimullah's *Tarikh-i-Bangalah* (1764), Ghulam Husain Salim's *Riyaz-us-Salatin* and Stewart's *History of Bengal* to Sir Jadunath Sarkar's *History of Bengal*,

2. J.N. Sarkar, ed. Hist. of Bengal. ii (1948). Bibliography, p. 501.

3 Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, tr. by H. Gibb (Hakluyt); The *Rehlah* of . . ., tr. & ed. by Mahdi Husain, Baroda, 1953.

Mulla Taqia (Taqqaya). 16th century: *Bayaz*. See S.H. Askari, Bengal Past & Present, 1948.

Abdul Latif was an inhabitant of Ahmedabad in Gujrat. During the reign of Jahangir he wrote his travel account from Agra on boat to Rajmahal (now in Bihar). This is a very valuable source material. It may even be described as a supplement to the brief account of Bihar and Bengal given in the *'Ain-i-Akbari*. Sir Jadunath Sarkar secured perhaps the only extant ms. of this and translated the portions relating to Bihar. JBORS. Vol. 5. Pt. IV, pp. 601-3.

Reference may be made to the history known as *Fathiyyah-i-ibriyyah* or *Tarikh-i-Assam* by Shihabuddin Talish, reporter of Mir Jumla, Governor of Bengal (1659-1663).

As regards the absence of the conception of social history among the medieval historians see my *History of History Writing in Medieval India*, Calcutta, 1977.

4. *Vide* my 'Survey of Medieval Indian Historiography' in Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, 1963-64.

ed. vol. 2 (1948), Sukhamoy Bandopadhyaya's *Banglar Itihaser Duso Bachhar* (1962) and Sushla Mandal's *Bangadesher Itihas Madhyayug Prathama Parva* (1963). But most of these are political histories. So the lack of social history of Bengal persists even to-day.

I express my deep indebtedness to all those scholars who in the modern age have left their imprint on different or scattered books or articles or are still engaged in untiring and steadfast devotion in the field of Bengal's social history. Its background till the Pala-Sena period or on the eve of the Muslim conquest of Bengal has been discussed in *History of Bengal* vol. I (1943) and *Bangla Desher Itihas* (in Bengali, 1946) by the late savant, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar. But perhaps in the modern age Dr. Nihar Ranjan Ray, took first firm footsteps in the field of writing on Bengal's social history in *Bāngālir Itihās Ādiparva* (1357/1950). For it is not political history. It is a pen-picture of Bengali society and the character of society-based state of Bengal.[5] Satindra Mohan Chattopadhyaya's *Bānglār Sāmajik Itihāser Bhumikā* (A.D. 1100-1900) is a readable and attractive book suitable for the general reader. Till today no standard social history of Medieval Bengal has been composed, except perhaps by Dr. Abdul Karim but it ends before Akbar. It is not easy to write it. Bengal has neither any Kalhana nor Khaldun. My humble endeavour, based on materials collected in the beggar's bowl, is also not complete, as the

5. *Vide* Bibliography.

(*a*) The following deceased scholars among others deserve mention: Haraprasad Sastri, Dinesh Chandra Sen, Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad, Sushil Kumar De, Biman Bihari Majumdar, Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Nihar Ranjan Ray.

(*b*) The following among the scholars still living deserve mention: Sukumar Sen, [Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya, Srimati Kalyani Mallick, Sukhamoy Mukhopadhyay, Tapan Kumar Ray Chaudhuri and others.

(*c*) Among the scholars of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), A.B.M. Habibullah, Abdul Karim, A. Rahim, Enamul Huq, Muhammad Shahidullah and others.

Bangalir Itihas Adi Parva by Nihar Ranjan Ray has now been reprinted (1980).

bag is not yet full; at best it is only an introduction; it merely raises a point of view.

It may not be now out of place to discuss briefly the sources of the social history of medieval Bengal. The source-materials of political and social history are mostly of the same mould. The similar sources are as follows: (*i*) Chronicles in different languages, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Bengali, Koch, Asamiya etc. But social details are very few and their extraction is extremely arduous; (*ii*) Notices in general histories and encyclopaedic works like Persian *Subh-i-Sadiq* and *Rauzat ul Tahirin*; (*iii*) Government orders and letters in different languages; (*iv*) Accounts of different travellers, Muslim, Buddhist. Portuguese, Dutch, English, French etc: (*v*) Archacological sources, A detailed and critical, scientific analysis of the histories and the art of temples, mosques, mausoleums and *dargahs*, is indispensably necessary. Reliable materials of Muslim occupation and expansion in Bengal are to be found here. Again the inscriptions on the temples, images, mosques, mausoleums and *dargahs* help us in understanding social history. Besides, there are coins and the inscriptions thereon.[6] (*vi*) Literature is a principal source of political history but its importance in writing social history is much more than in the former. To know the clue of the true social picture, it is incumbent on the historian to discard the dusty yard of historical chronicles and to bathe in and even to dive into the waters of the sea of literature. And this literature is not romantic secular literature, but it is religious literature. The inevitable materials of social history are,—besides the religious literature dealing with Brahmanism, Islam, Sufism, Sufi-Yoga-Nathism, Vaishnavism and other religions,—the

6. For a bibliography on history of medieval Bengal, see M.R. Tarafdar, *Husain Shahi Bengal* (1965); J. Sarkar, *Hist. of Bengal, ed.* ii (1948).

For history of Bengali literature see the works of Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, and Dinesh Chandra Sen. For Vaishnava works, see Biman Bihari Majumdar, *Chaitanya Chariter Upadan*.

Inscriptions on coins often throw light on social and cultural matters. The image of Lakshmi was inscribed on the coins of Muhammad Ghuri and Devanagari script was also used besides Persian thereon.

Mangal Kavyas (Manasa, Chandi, Ganga, Dharma, Ray, Ghazi and others), including the stories of exploits of numerous gods and goddesses, and Muslim *pirs* and *ghazis*. Again, besides the compositions of the Hindus, 'Islami Bengali literature' and the poems of Muslim poets steeped in Vaishnava thought, opens a new door to social evolution. The *punthis*, *kechchhā kāhini* (stories of adventure) and *pānchālis*, bear witness to the interchanges between the two communities. True, these might mostly be legendary tales with very little of political history. It is a matter of regret that all this has not been studied yet; (*vii*) Traditions and folklore etc., though generally eschewed in political history, supply ample materials to social history; (*viii*) For proper understanding of social evolution regional, topographical accounts must be collected. The religious and social history of Bengal is largely hidden behind the sacred sites in the village (*pithasthanas*) or places associated with the saints and *pirs*. It is also necessary to salvage and study such sites.

As the social history of medieval Bengal is not fully lighted up in the absence of adequate sources and standard works, there is considerable divergence and clash of opinions on its different aspects, especially Hindu—Muslim relations, social and cultural development and the like. Three main groups may be discerned according to opinion: (*i*) The historians of the Hindu group believe that the entire history of Muslim rule, from its inception to its close is the history of intolerance, orthodoxy, bloodshed and fear: (*ii*) The writers of the Islamic group praise the Muslim administrative structure. They, however, firmly hold that though the Hindus and Muslims came close to each other in certain spheres, union was impossible; (*iii*) the nationalist historians think that out of the com-mingling of the two communities not only a common culture but even a united nation grew up.[7]

The above-mentioned views are only partially true. In the first place in the history of the initial years of Muslim conquest

7. This subject was the theme of discussion in lectures delivered by me on *Thoughts on Trends of Cultural Contact in Medieval India* (January -March, 1980) under the auspices of the Asiatic Society (B.B. Majumdar Lectures, in Press).

of Bengal when war conditions prevailed, intolerance, bigotry, loot, killings and bloodshed certainly existed. Hence among the conquered peoples, too, increase of orthodoxy and great fear held sway for appropriate reasons. Therefore several historians have assumed that throughout the entire medieval age the history of Hindu-Muslim relations is a repetition of this primary intolerance, bigotry and bloodshed. Secondly, many being motivated by political or sinister designs, have sought to widen the gulf between the two communities by emphasizing on their religious and social differences. Thirdly, both among the Hindus and Muslims the sense of religious and social exclusiveness was so strong that no religious or social unity was possible in theory. Nevertheless, as a result of living side by side for long, the evolution of a surprisingly composite culture and mutual interchange between the two communities became easy and feasible in practical life. The tempo of this social stream depended on state policy. At times the flow was easy and spontaneous: at times it came to be blocked. Only one side of it is lightened up in political history. But it is only in literature that we get a hint of an effort towards inter-communal harmony that used to flow among the masses like the Phalgu with its sub-terranean waters, notwithstanding unfavourable politics, unknown to it and outside the royal court. The judgment of the historian, who fails to take due cognisance of the evidence of literature, is also bound to be biased. Everybody is aware of the good consequences of such an effort, cherished by the favourable atmosphere of royal patronage in the time of Akbar, and of the evil consequences caused by the unfavourable situation under Aurangzeb. That notwithstanding collision, killings, plunder, rape, conversion and oppression, there was cultural harmony in society, religion, literature and art is undisputed. In politics an effort was made to effect the birth of a united nation but numerous obstacles came on the path of realisation. But it is literature that bears witness to the fact that the two communities were coming closer. Later various reasons accounted for the fact that numerous hindrances grew powerful against this communal rapprochement.

It is the duty of a scientific and objective historian not to be interrupted by any kind of communal, violent, chauvinistic love

of one's country or racial pride. In 1937 Sir Jadunath Sarkar recommended to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the adoption of such a line of approach in writing a national history of India. The late Dr. R.C. Majumdar also accepted Jadunath's devotion to Truth. In fact all famous writers are seekers of Truth. But it is generally seen that even though they utilise the same materials, they arrive at different conclusions. Two principal reasons account for this: (*i*) the nature of the contemporary chronicles in Persian. Their authors used either to write to the orders of the Kings, or ministers or *amirs* and to extol their excellences or loved, under the influence of pride or prejudice, to express the greatness of Islam and *shariat* (Holy Law). The more awful and ghastly the picture of the killings and oppression, the greater would be the misery, the humility, anguish and the extent of the loss of the defeated *kafir* and the higher would be the glory of the victorious Muslims and greater the victory of Islam. The scientific historian, in writing veracious and true history, must needs depend on such contemporary *Tārikhs* (histories) and facts mentioned therein. But still that history need not necessarily be wholly trustworthy or truthful. The impartial historian has to be a sharp critic. The facts obtained from such chronicles must be analysed. A conclusion based on such an unanalysed fact would be wrong. A wholly different picture emerges from facts gleaned from contemporary literature. (*ii*) It is easy to say that the historian should be objective, but it is extremely difficult to become so in practice. His psychology, whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim,—the method of selection of facts or attachment to pre-conceived theory,—all will influence his mental restraint.[8]

8. See the writer's article 'Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Historical Writings', JBRS. 1960. A brief reference to the correspondence between him and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India on the writing of Indian history is to be found here. My *History writing and Thoughts on Indian History* (Presidential Address, Ind. Hist, Congress, Calicut, 1976) may also be seen.

2

The Turkish Conquest of Bengal, an epoch-making event

The Turkish conquest in the very beginning of the thirteenth century brought a new age in Bengal's history, not only in political but also in social life as well.[9] Buddhism and Brahma-

9. It will perhaps be out of place to make a full analysis of all the reasons of the Turkish conquest of Bengal. But it is undeniable that two of the reasons were, – first,weakness arising out of the want of a united power in the political field and second, the lack of contact between the ruler and the ruled in the social field. The Bengalis were not wanting in courage and efficiency but the ruling classes did not realise the necessity of introducing any change suited to the age in the art of war, tactics and weapons. They adopted the traditional system and used to rely on charms and incantations than prowess. The stability of the foundations of a stately power which was more dependant on the favour of stars, *mantra—tantra* and *swastayans* (charms, mystical formulas and performance of religious rites) can easily be imagined. What is to be done when one is surrounded by the army of the enemy? A book on war states that the ashes of the cremation ground, and the paste of the bark and root of a particular tree are to be smeared on the trumpet and charms are to be uttered; a sandal-paste mark is to be put on one's forehead and *sarbajnodaya* charm is to be muttered in prayer and victory will be secured with the trumpet-sound, Vide Sukumar Sen, *Madhya Yuge Bangla O Bangali*, 1-2.

nism were running along parallel streams in Bengal from the Gupta age. The confrontation between them in the 7th century healed up during the Pala age. The four centuries rule of Buddhist Pala kings constituted a glorious age of unprecedented harmony in the social life of Bengal. Synthesis of Vedic and Pauranik Brahman, non-Brahman and Mahayana-Vajrayana-Tantrayana Buddhism and culture took place. All communities enjoyed the patronage of the rulers. But the immigrant South Indian, conservative rulers of Sena and Varman families, averse to change, encouraged Brahmanism to save it. The lack of connecting link between the ruler and the ruled that gradually developed in the social life was one of the principal reasons of Turkish conquest. The Turki conquerors first destroyed the Buddhist *Viharas* and the Brahmanical temples for two objects: one financial, or the plunder of the wealth stored there : and second, psychological, or by destroying the temples of the gods and the goddesses, the sensitive spots of the people, to create panic in the minds of the masses and thereby to stun them and make them inert. Many Buddhist *sramanas* and Brahman *pandits* fled to contiguous kingdoms, Nepal, Mithila, Orissa, Kamrup and Jharikhand (Jharkhand). Many, by concealing themselves hither and thither saved their lives, their caste and their religion. Others had to forsake everything. It is to this that the doggerel verse 'Gharbhanga' (House break) in 'Dharmakatha' makes a hint.

'. . . . . . For the sake of destroying the caste of the Brahmans Niranjan enters Jajpur in the garb of a Muslim. He breaks temples and vestibules with cow-bone. Numerous worshippers flee with their books in hand. All paint marks on the forehead are wiped away, O brother! the Yavana comes to the festival of Dharma. All temples and vestibules in separate places are demolished without listening to any prayer. . . . '[10]

A. **Causes of Separatism between Hindus and Muslims**

It is undeniably true that the Muslim invasion was different

10. Chapter 'Niranjaner Rushma', *Sunya Purana*, ed. by Charu Chandra Bandopadhyaya (B.S. 1336). Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I/Aparardha, 134; Karim, *Social History*, 143-4.

from all foreign invasions in ancient India, viz., Persian, Greek, Saka—Pahlava and Huna. The earlier foreigners came and lived in India and became merged in the ocean of Indian people. But the Muslims did not completely merge with the Indians. Why did this wall of separatism grow up among the Hindus and the Muslims?

Al Biruni, the famous Muslim savant and first Indologist of the 11th century, not only observed the impassable ocean between the two communities but also sought to analyse the causes of this separatism. He writes, 'The Hindus entirely differ from us in every respect'. After referring to the linguistic differences, he has raised the questions of religious divergences, and differences in rules of etiquettes, manners and customs. In referring to the general attitude of the Hindus towards the Muslims, he has commented that the blind bigotry of the former is so strong that they think that all foreigners are *mlechchas* and impure, and hold that marriage with them or any other relationship, like sitting together, eating and drinking etc. are forbidden, as all this would defile them. It is this which does not permit any contact with them and is the widest cleavage between them.[11] In fine, according to Al Biruni, the cause of this obstacle is the linguistic and racial difference, the iconoclastic zeal of the conquerors and the

11. After referring to the linguistic differences, Al Biruni writes: "Secondly they totally differ from us in religion, as we believe in nothing in which they believed, and vice versa. . . . In the third place, in all manners and usages, they differ from us to such a degree as to frighten their children with us, with our dress, and our ways and customs, and as to declare us to be devil's breed, and our doings as to the very opposite of that is good and proper . . . All their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them, —against all foreigners. They call them *mlechchas* i.e. impure and forbid having any connection with them, be it by inter-marriage or any other kind of relationship, or by sitting, eating and drinking, with them, because thereby, they think they would be polluted. They consider as impure anything which touches the fire and water of a foreigner . . . They are not allowed to receive anybody who does not belong to them, even if he wished it, or was inclined to their religion. This, too, renders any connection with them quite impossible, and constitutes the widest gulf between us and them? Sachau, *Alberuni's India*. i. 17-22.

religious superstitions and isolationist mentality of the Hindu Brahmans, born of pride and self-eulogy. Al Biruni has equally blamed the fanaticism of the Muslims as well as the social bigotry of the Hindus. His judgment and analysis are both true. For he is an impartial witness and a bitter critic of his own patron and besides, he was really sympathetic towards the Hindus.

There is no similar reference to Hindu-Muslim relations in Eastern India in Bengali literature of the 13th and 14th centuries. But one can imagine the position from the picture given by Vidyapati in his *Kirtilata* in the 15th century. 'The Hindus and the Turks are living together. The religion of one is the object of ridicule of the other. Some sounds the call to *azan*, others read the Vedas. In one society there is mixing, in another the feeling of division is prominent. Some call their learned men 'Ojha', others call them 'Khwaja'. Some observe fast, others Ramzan. Some use copper-pots, others pitchers. Some perform *namaz*, others offer *puja*. Many Turks catch *begār* (forced labour) on the road. "They catch a Brahman boy and place a cow's bone on his head to outrage his faith. They wipe out the sectarian mark on the forehead, tear the sacred thread and want to make them ride on horseback. They distil wine by washing a special paddy (*uridhān*), break temples and build mosques. The earth is filled with graveyards and dumps of carcasses of cows, there is no space to set feet on; To the Hindu they say, 'Go away'. The Turk, even if younger, dares assault a senior."[12]

B. Was there any change in the sharpness of the reasons of separatism?

While Al Biruni's 11th century analysis is objective and realistic, can we say the same thing with regard to Vidyapati's 15th century picture? Theoretically the differences were there. But did practice correspond to theory?

A question comes to mind, was no change effected in succeeding ages in these reasons of separatism? Or did these reasons

12. *Kirtilata*, passage quoted.
See Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuger Bangla O Bangali*, 6-7.

lose their keenness? A few say 'No'. Others say 'Yes'. Before arriving at any definite conclusion in solving this question, it becomes necessary to discuss a few points. First in the Turko-Afghan period, later in the Mughal age.

1. Spread of Islam in Bengal and its reaction on Hinduism: Direct Means

Religious condition is most intimately connected with social organisation. So in order to clearly discuss Hindu-Muslim relations, it is necesssary first of all to discuss Muslim conquest of Bengal, establishment of political authority and its expansion and spread of Islam. For these matters are inseparably connected. But up till now no full-scale religious history of Bengal has been written through analytical discussions of the materials of different categories.

Though Islam is a proselytizing religion the Quranic injunction is clearly emphatic : *La ikraha fiddin*, there is no compulsion in religion. But there was compulsion in practice. The religion of Islam was spread in Bengal principally through two means, direct and indirect. But the means and the reasons were often mixed up. Among direct means four streams are worth mention. (*a*) military method or forcible conversion, (*b*) voluntary adoption of Islam; (*c*) religious or peaceful persuasion by *pirs, faqirs* or *qazis* and others to adopt Islam; (*d*) colonial settlement of immigrant foreigners and increase in numbers of Muslim population. Islam was spread also by indirect means, through establishment of mosques and *madrassas* etc. and the mass-welfare and supernatural activities of *pirs* and *faqirs*.[13]

(*a*) **Forcible conversions**[14]

The current belief is that the conqueror encompassed the spread of Islam as a religion with the sword in one hand and the

13. Sushila Mandal, *Bangadesher Itihas, Pratham Parba*, 1963, App. 'Gha'.
14. Arnold, *Preaching of Islam* (1913), 279, 280; Titus, *Islam in India and Pakistan*, 44-45; Herklots, Ja'afar Sharif, *Qanum-i-Islam*, Crooke's edn., 3-4, 6-7; *Sunya Purana*, op. cit.

Quran in the other. But this belief is not wholly true. In Bengal the Muslims were numerically in a minority, the Hindus were in majority. The conversion of the Hindus with the sword alone was not easy. It is of course undeniable that in the age immediately following the establishment of Muslim rule, the momentum of spread of Islam was accelerated. There is no doubt in many cases forcible conversion was effected. But for different reasons,—political, social and religious—the spread of Islam in Bengal had become possible. In this development and in the evolution of Muslim society, the ruling classes, the aristocracy and the upper echelons of government officials, played a noteworthy role.

(b) Voluntary conversions

Conversion was a direct and extensive means of spread of Islam. There are numerous instances of it in Bengali literature besides historical works. Though people of different strata of society embraced Islam, yet mainly it was the people of the lower classes that were converted. And the initiation of low-caste Hindus on an extensive scale may be said to be one of the many causes of the spread of Islam. This collective conversion became possible on account of several social factors. In Eastern India the Brahmanical religion had never been able to establish its ascendancy equally strongly on all sections of the society. There Hinduism was not as well-organised and coherent as in North, West and South India. The inhabitants of Eastern Bengal did not wholly conform to Hinduism. Rather on the eve of the Muslim conquest they were the followers of a corrupt and perverted form of Buddhism. The story of the rivalry of the Buddhists and the Brahmanas is known to all. The Buddhists of the Pala period were persecuted under the Sena rule as a result of the revival of Brahmanism. Consequently Buddhism came to be in its last gasp. Tantricism spread among the Brahmans too. Every Buddhist organization was deprived of royal patronage. During the Pala age no class in the society—merchant, artist, peasant, *chandāla*,—was neglected, but now the peasants and the so-called lower class people came to be disregarded. It may easily be inferred from Taranatha's account that the Buddhist Bhikshus, out of natural anger towards the Brahmana rulers, acted as spies of Muhammad Ikhtiyar uddin ibn Bakhtyar Khalji. If there is any truth in 'Sekh Suvodaya', it will be proved that even before the Turkish conquest of Bengal, a preacher of Islam gained a foothold in the court of Lakshmanasena and facilitated the path of the victors.[15] For natural reasons Buddhists regarded the Muslim conquerors as the messengers of freedom (cf. *Dharmapujavidhan*). The worship of Dharma Thakur is current even now among the inhabitants of West Bengal. There has been inter-mixture of it with manners and customs of Tantric and Brahmanical religion. To counter Brahmanical oppression Dharma Thakur made preparations for protection of *sat dharmis* (or followers of Dharma). The Hindu gods and goddesses underwent a transformation. For example, Dharma assumed the grab of a *Yavana* (Muslim), Vishnu became Paighambar, Brahma Pākāmbar, Sulapāni (Siva) Adam, Ganesh Qazi, Kartick Ghazi, *muni faqir*, Chandika Devi Haya Bibi (Eve), Padmavati Bibi Nur (Light) and so on. Thus Hindu gods and goddesses in Islamic garb, entered Jajpur and causing the destruction of more than one temple caused the hell (of destruction) to be let loose.[16]

In this way the low caste people welcomed Islam to escape social oppression. The fishermen, cultivators, hunters, marine robbers and other tribes of the river-irrigated East Bengal were regarded as impure and untouchable by the caste-proud upper class Hindus. To this despised and neglected human beings Islam with its message of equality and monotheism prescribed a means of escape from social hindrances and taboos and chastisements and gave a clue to a nobler life. It was principally for this reason that they were influenced by the persuasions and preaching of the *mullahs* and *maulavis*, even though causes of compulsory conversions were not wholly absent.[17]

Besides this, many embraced Islam out of the lure or hope of gaining social status or dignity and advantages of material

15-17. Karim, *Social History*, 143-4; R.C. Mitra, Decline of Buddism, *Visva Bharati*, 1954, pp. 78-79 : 81; Hunter, *Indian Muslims*, 145-7; Census Reports, India (1911) i. 128; Bengal (1901) i. 156f; (1911)i. 202ff. 248; my *Islam in Bengal*, 21-23; *Sekhsubhodaya*, ed. by S. Sen; S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I. *Purbardha*, 79; *Aparardha*,, 133-4.

Haya in Bengali, Hawwa in Arabic.

gain e.g. financial or political concessions. Conversions to Islam wiped out political differences between Hindus and Muslims, and secured exemptions from the hated *jaziya* and certain other taxes like pilgrim tax, tax on shaving, bathing etc. Those Hindus who in their own society were denied social prestige, eagerly adopted Islam in the hope of winning political distinction in the Islamic state. At times, of course, the Sultan and his officers used to effect conversions through use of force, offered the converts posts especially in the revenue department and to strengthen the conversion had them married to Muslim women.

At times high caste Hindus also adopted Islam. On the basis of evidence supplied by Bengali literature Professor Sukumar Sen has observed, 'Sometimes a high-caste Hindu, motivated by gain or greed or voluntarily accepted Islam'. None interfered with it. Brindavan Das has referred to this apathy in the Hindu society; 'Among the Hindus even a Brahman willingly offers to become a *Yavana* (i.e. Muslim). The Hindus assume an air of indifference. Of what use will it be to kill one who has already committed suicide?[18]

18. *JASB*, 1867, p. 132; 1952, intro; Abdul Wali, *The Mohammedan Castes of Bengal* K.P. Rubbee, *Origins of Mussalmans of Bengal;* Sukumar Sen, *Madhyajuge Bangla O Bangali*, 27-29; Brindaban, *Chaitanyabhagvat*, Adi. 14.

Vaishnava literature depicts the mentality of the Muslims to be different from that of the Hindus. To the former the Hinduistic manners of any *Yavana* (i.e. Muslim) was unbearable as it disparages the honour of the ruling race. On the basis of the qazi's complaint against Yavana Haridas, the *Mulukpati* inflicted unutterable oppression: "Though a *Yavana*, he adopts Hindu manners, He should be brought and his case should be tried well."

On the analogy of the Brahmans who claimed to be the highest caste, the Muslims also considered themselves to be *mahāvamsajāta* i.e. born of a great family. Just as the Hindus had a morbid mania of defilement communicated through touch or contact with the Muslims, the latter also did the same with regards to the Hindus. The *Mulukpati* (Sultan, Alauddin Husain Shah) told Haridas:

"আমরা হিন্দুরে দেখি নাই খাই ভাত,
তাহা তুমি ছাড় হই মহাবংশজাত।"

See Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge Bangla O Bangali.*

It is easy to understand the motivations behind conversion of the neglected lower class people of the Hindus i.e. out of gain and greed. But it is comparatively difficult to understand voluntary forsaking of one's religion by caste-Hindus. It is also not possible to calculate the proportionate number of such converts. Still it is quite possible that the Hindu society was responsible for such voluntary attitude. Oftentimes a Hindu had to change religion very easily or for imaginary offence or fault e.g. fault of sight, fault of touch, fault of food, fault of smell etc. Most of those who were expelled from the Hindu society for violating the social injunctions swelled the ranks of converted Muslims. For using impure food or water, intimacy with untouchables, violation of marriage rules or for illicit love, many were ostracised by society i.e. they were deprived of the privilege of smoking and drinking together with men of one's own caste or tribe. The Muslims knew that in most cases the means to effect loss of caste of the Hindus was of the use of prohibited food or water. So very often they took recourse to artifice or deceit. Of the deceived Hindus some died (by committing suicide), some left their homes. Others accepted the Muslim rules of conduct. From 'Chaitanyacharitamrita' we come to learn that Sultan Husain Shah made Subuddhi Rai, 'Gauda Adhikari' or Chaudhury or Kotwal of Gaud drink impure water. This made the latter to leave home and later settle at Brindavan on the advice of Sri Chaitanya. That loss of caste is the worst punishment to a Hindu may be illustrated with reference to the example of the Pirali Brahmans of Khulna district.[19] For them there was no other alternative to adoption of Islam.

19. Krishnadas Kaviraj, *Chaitanyacharitamrita, Madhya Khanda*, Ch. 25.

During the excavation of a tank Subuddhi Ray whipped his officer, Syed Hussain Khan, for negligence in supervision. Later it is this officer who rose to be Sultan Husain Shah and he showed due respects to his erstwhile master. But the Sultan's *begum*, noticing the marks of injury on his body, incited him to kill Subuddhi. The Sultan did not agree, as "Ray, my protector is my father. "আমার পোষ্টা রায় হয় পিতা"

Then the *begum* asked him to destroy his caste. The Sultan objected to this also, saying that Subuddhi would not survive the

(c) Religious or Peaceful means

Besides military methods, application of force or use of trickery Islam was spread also through religious or peaceful means. Long before the occupation of Bengal in the 13th century contact of this region had been established with the Islamic community, particularly through the medium of merchants and non-Indian Arab, Turk, Afghan Muslim colonists and religious preachers. Even though direct evidence is lacking, it is believed that the Muslims had contacts with Chittagong area within the first few centuries of the rise of Islam. It is conjectured that Baba Adam Shahid of Rampal, Shah Sultan Rumi and other Sufi saints and scholars came here before the Turkish conquest of Bengal. Before the approach of the armed forces came the religious preachers and the achievement of the latter in the spread of Islam was in no way less significant than the power of the sword. In fact, Kshiti Mohan Sen observed the "Muhammadan proselytization of India did not begin with coercion and bloodshed; the first conversions were made by its saints". As a result of this peaceful penetration a difference in nature can be discerned between the spread of Islam in Bengal and its progress in Northern India. In Northern India the expansion of Islam was mainly limited to urban areas and administrative centres. But in Eastern Bengal Islam was spread principally in rural areas. Long ago Risley arrived at the conclusion that fundamentally conversions ocurred among the tribes.[20]

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loss of his caste. At last at the importunities of his wife the Sultan made him drink 'Karoar pani' (impure water). Thereupon Subuddhi left the world and went to Kashi. As the local *smārta pandits* (Brahmans, well-versed in *Smriti*) recommended different procedures (for purification), his doubts were not cleared up. Subsequently, following Sri Chaitanya's advice he began to reside in Brindaban.

Ja'afar Sharif, 4; R.C. Majumdar *Banglar Itihas* (Madhayayug), Ch. 12, p.244; *Hist. & Culture of Indian People*, Vol. V. Ch. 16 (by M.W. Mirza); O Malley, *Khulna Dt. Gaz.* (1908), 68.

20. Abdul Karim, *Social History* . . . Chs. 2, 3, pp. 17-18; K.M. Sen in *Cultural Heritage of Indian*; Titus, *op. cit.*, 44-45; Ja 'afar Sharif, *op.* cit., 3; Risley, *Tribes & Castes of Bengal;* The People of India, ed. Crooke.

It may be mentioned that besides Chittagong, Ceylon and Sind were also commercial centres which attracted the Arabs.

Unlike other religious systems, Islam has no priestly class for spread of religion. Every faithful Muslim is a preacher. The want of a priest was filled by *pirs, faqirs, ghazis, qazis* and *mullahs*. Many were influenced by the unostentatious lives and the instructive, wise sayings of spiritually gifted *faqirs, pirs*, darweshes and Sufi saints. Many among them were poets, learned and versed in mysteries of religion who were foreign immigrants to Bengal. They not only maintained contact with outside Bengal, but also established new centres of education and regular performance of religious duties and study of religious books. The towns that grew up as centres of education, trade and administration, like Bihar Sharif, Satgaon, Panduah, Sonargaon and Srihatta (Sylhet) became the abodes of saints.

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may be ear-marked as the golden age in the preaching of Islam in Bengal, as performed by the Sufi missionaries. In fact Bengal turned out to be a powerful Sufi stronghold during the early medieval period. The activities of these saints, some of foreign origin and some of Indian origin, were not confined only to the *khanqas*. By imparting religious instruction and organising missionary activities, these saints exerted immense influence outside these, on the masses of the people, the ruling classes and even on the entire society in general. They helped much to elevate religious life and thought of Bengal and to increase the number of Bengali Muslims. Numerous *dargahs* and *takyas* (hermitages) were constructed in towns and villages throughout Bengal by these Sufis and later on by their disciples. Of these Pandua, consecrated to the memory of Alawul Huq and his son Nur Qutb ul Alam, the patron saints of Bengal, was the most important. One of the earliest missionaries of the 13th century, Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrezi, of revered memory, did considerable proselytization in Bengal till his death in 1244. Some saints, like Shah Jalal, the patron saint of Sylhet, were believed to have undertaken conquests.[21]

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21. Karim, *Social History*, 124; J. Wise, JASB. 1873, No. 3; Arnold. 280; Ibn Battuta, Tr. Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, iv. 151; Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I.

Besides these there were many zealous Muslims. All used to preach Islam in different ways. Acccording to the Quran it is the sacred work of all faithfuls to preach the message of Allah. Every body used to utilise the conservative and untouchability-tainted social organization of the Hindus as a means for realising their selfish interests. In this way conversions gradually increased.

(*d*) Immigration of foreign colonial settlers

But conversion cannot be said to be the only reason of increase of Muslim population. The immigration of numerous foreign Muslims may be said to be one of the principal reasons of this. For political, social and personal and other reasons, foreign Muslims,—Arab, Persian, Turk, Mughal,—took shelter in Bengal. The advent of these foreigners signified a social change. Most of them married Hindu women and the offspring of the mixed marriages or mixed Muslims, whose fathers were Muslims but mothers Hindus, swelled in numbers. In this way four classes of Muslims grew up in Bengal: (*a*) foreign colonial settlers who brought their wives with them; (*b*) foreign colonial settlers who married after arriving in Bengal; (*c*) local mixed Muslims; (*d*) local converted Muslims.[22]

Indirect Means:

Besides the direct means of spread of Islam there were indirect, silent means also. Immediately after the victory the conquerors used to construct mosques and connected *madrasahs*, where regular performance of religious or obligatory duties and development of education were unrestricted. The guide of the mosque, 'Imam, the teachers of the *madrasah*, 'Alim' and 'maulavi', were respected by all in the society. So their influence

22. Karim, *op. cit*, Chs. 2, 3; Ja'afar Sharif, 1, 6-7, quoted in my *Islam in Bengal*, 21-22. Vijay Gupta, *Padmapuran* Ed. by Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya, p.56; Abdul Karim, *Bangla Prachi Punthir Vivaran*, Pt. 1. Bangiya Sahitya Parisat Patrika, B.S. 1310, p. 159. For Badr Saheb, Enamul Huq; *Bange Sufi Prabhava*, *pp*. 132-3.

too, was unlimited. In the festivals that were held in the attached graves of the *pirs* and *faqirs*, the Hindus, irrespective of their religion, used to join. In the orphanages (*Yātimkhānāh*) and guest houses (*mehmānkhānāh*) attached to the mosques, the poor, and sheltered boys and girls and sick persons, undergoing treatment were converted on many occasions by taking food of Muslims. Something has been said about the *pirs* and *faqirs* who used to perform activities for welfare of the people. In the Khulna and Bagerhat area the famous Pir Khan Jahan Ali had a tank excavated to remove the scarcity of water felt by the people. Many of his Hindu admirers adopted Islam. Again the various current stories of supernatural actions of the *pirs* and *faqirs* had so influenced the illiterate and superstitious Hindus that many embraced Islam.[23]

Besides *pirs* and *faqirs*, the ruling classes, the aristocracy and officers used to help the spread of Islam directly and indirectly. They rendered special help in the development of Islamic spirit, in the construction of mosques, *madrasahs* and *dargahs*; and in the growth of education and literature. The Muslim holy men saints and the learned used to enjoy their patronage. They also performed many arts of public welfare. In this way the vigorous preaching of Islam in Bengal became immensely successful especially in its eastern and northern districts.[24]

23. There are many stories current about the supernatural activities of the *Pirs*. A few are mentioned below as examples. (a) Pir Shah Jalal used to travel daily from Sylhet to Mecca and back. (*Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, 238-40); (*b*) Pir Badar of Chittagong came riding on a fish from Arabia to the confluence of the Karnaphuli river. The land lighted by the flame of his lamp (*chati*) was named *Chatigaon* on Chattagram. Both the Hindu and Muslim helmsmen and crew of East Bengal recite the songs of Badar Ghazi before commencing their journey and offer *sinni* (*Shirni*) or water in his honour; (*c*) In Ghutiari Sharif of the Sundarbans Pir Mobarak Ali and his brother Kalu Ghazi are worshipped both by the Hindus and the Muslims; (*d*) Again Dakshin Ray 'Ghazi' of the Sundarbans, being the god of the tigers and killer of carnivorous animals is honoured as a well-wisher of both communities.

24. My *Islam in Bengal*, 21.

Reaction:

While Islam was spreading in this land as a cumulative result of all these factors a new force arose which was destined to arrest it, at least for some time. The advent of Sri Chaitanya (1486-1533) was a memorable event in the cultural history of Bengal. Enmeshed by the cords of *bhakti*, the Bengalis became transformed into an entire nation. As a result of the appearance of Chaitanyadeva, Nityanand and other energetic Vaisnava religious preachers and spread of religion by them and the development of a special theology by the *Sapta—Goswami*, the revival of Hinduism manifested itself strongly. As a result of this the religious life of the Hindus in Bengal, Orissa and even Assam came to be electrified and transformed especially in the cultivation of spiritualism, development of literature and the blooming of music (*Kirtan* songs). It is not that Vaishnavism effected the moral uplift of only the upper and the middle class people, it helped the poor masses of the people by showing honour to every human being, and through the medium of *nām-sankirtan*, established the lower classes and illiterate men in their own majesty. By spreading Vaishnavism in Assam and its adjoining regions Shankardeva and his followers included the local inhabitants within the fold of Hindu society. Vaishnavism was able to arrest the progress of Islam specially in the areas remote from the urban areas of Bengal, and extended its influence over medieval Bengal. The Vaishnavas made the neglected tribes conform to the rules of their own religion, encompassed a wide extension of Vaishnavism among people of all classes and conditions from the highest to the lowest through ecstatic dances and devotional songs. Moreover, the Vaishnavas created a new, popular and lively Bengali literature depending on the different stories of the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharata*. At times the Muslim sultans also encouraged this work. This Vaishnava literature influenced the Muslim society as well; at least 121 Muslim poets felt the impact of Vaishnava religious faith.

On the other hand, so far as Islam was concerned, the stream of immigrant Sufis and missionaries and preachers had considerably thinned, so that there were only a few who could counter the vigour of Vaishnavism. Again, the propagation of

Islam in Bengal had not been followed by a corresponding widening of knowledge of the religion among the masses of the people.[25] The reasons will be discussed later.

2. Political and Religious status of the Hindus during Muslim rule

The Muslim conquerors used to maintain their political and cultural exclusiveness. Bengal was an Islamic state or a part thereof. So there also as in Delhi, the Hindus did not enjoy any political status. No non-Muslim could enjoy the rights of a full citizen. But, those who made an agreement to perform certain duties and pay the *jaziya* tax in return for protection, were designated *zimmis* and they were tolerated. A few social and legal disabilities were imposed on the Hindus e.g. they had to wear special dress; riding on horseback and use of arms were prohibited; they had no right to give evidence in the qazi's court; and they had to abstain from performing any kind of religious functions in public. From the *Zakhirat ul Muluk* of Shaikh

25. Sarkar, ed. *History of Bengal* Vol. 2.

For influence of Vaishnavism on Muslim poets, see Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya, *Banglar Vaishnava Bhavapanna Musalman Kavi* (B.S. 1356). Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge Bangla O Bangali, 22.*

According to Dr. Sukumar Sen if the royal power of the Bengal Sultanate was not destroyed in the third quarter of the 16th century there would perhaps have been awakening in other fields as well. In cultural history Vaishnavism connected the frontier kingdom of Bengal with the rest of India. In political history Bengal was joined with the Mughal empire of Akbar. As the Mughal administration put great emphasis on revenue-collection the way to free cultural development in Bengal came to be obstructed. For fear of Mughal authority the physical strength of the Bengalis also gradually suffered. Incidentally it may be said that the spread of *Bhakti dharma* was also partly responsible for this. There was no trace of weakness in Sri Chaitanya's practice and spread of religion. He disobeyed the order of the Qazi and surrrounded (*gherao*) his residence with his own followers. This is the first expression of the principle of *Satyagraha* or passive resistance. But when his *antaranga sadhana rasadharma* spread among the masses, it sowed the seeds of imbecility in Bengal along with Vishnupur and Orissa.

Hamdani it is known that the lives and property of the *zimmis* used to depend on observance of 20 varieties of rules. Those *zimmis* who violated the rules were subjected to war-time measures applicable to non-Muslims.

Of the four different schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) Abu Hanifa alone permitted the Hindus to pursue their religious functions in return for payment of *jaziya*. All others differed; and did not prescribe any alternative between the two ways, 'Islam or Death'. Among the Sultans, all except Mahmud officially accepted the Hanafi rule as the legal code. But bigoted Muslims were opposed to this ideal, e.g. Ziauddin Barani, contemporary of Muhammad Tughlaq and Firuz Tughlaq, Afif during Firuz's reign, Yahya of 15th century and Ferishta of 17th century.

The State was Islamic but society was mixed. In Bengal the Hindus were for nearly first 200 years excluded from high posts. So they entertained an angry and hostile attitude towards the Muslims. Losing independence and in agitated frame of mind they spent their days in expectation of killing *mlechchas*.[26] In this way arose a direct polarisation between the *kafirs* and the *mlechchas*.

3. Social and Religious Differences.

The gulf created by the lowered political status of the Hindus was further widened by the social and religious differences between Hinduism and Islam. In that age both the Hindu and the Muslim alike carefully nurtured their own legal, social and religious characteristics. Most earlier invaders belonged to a lower cultural plane as compared to the Hindus and hence

26. The conditions imposed in the *Zakhirat ul mulk* have been summarised in R.C. Majumdar (ed.) *Delhi Sultanate*. The position of non-Muslims in an Islamic state in theory, is in Quran ix, 29; *Ency. Islam* (*Zimmi, Jaziya*); Barani, *Fatawa i Jahandari, ed.* & tr. by M. Habib and Mrs. Khan; *Tarikhi Firuz Shahi*. E & D. iii, Khadduri *Laws of Peace and War in Islam; Sources of Indian Tradition* (1958), 489-90; J. Sarkar *Aurangzib*, Vol. iii; Hindustan Standards, Puja. No. 1950.

become easily merged in Hindu civilization. But Islam was a new, universal religion, which grew up in the background of the developed civilization is of the Middle East and out of synthesis of Judaism, Christinity, Zoroastrianism, Neo-Platonism, Buddhism and Bedouin culture. With the message of one Allah, one Prophet, one religion, one scripture and one empire, Islam grew up as a natural but self-conscious, original, powerful religion. In such fundamental matters as the conception of supreme God or theology, philosophical concepts, religious literature and ways of worship, very sharp differences exist. Islam is transcendental, depending on command of Allah. The Hindus believe in divine immanence. The outward manifestation of God is the illustration of the inner divine power. The result of the realisation of 'Thou art That' is the advent of God as *avatara*. The concept of multiple gods and worship of idols are reprehensible in Islam. As Vidyapati puts it, 'one's religion excites the derision of the other'. In consequence the supremely holy idol and temple of the Hindus excite the hostility of the Muslims.

In the social plane the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims exercised considerable influence on the organization of the two societies and deeply stirred them to their inmost recesses. In social set-up it is seen that Islam, by liquidating the sense of exclusiveness, based on class, caste, family and colour establishes such a religious community where equality pervades among all Muslims from the highest to the lowest. On the other hand Hindu society was based on *Varnasrama* and hierarchally organised. Here separatism and untouchability were considered to be a sanctified prescription. In the words of Vidyapati 'commingling in some, division in others'. There was acute inequality in the social life of the two communities. In marriage affairs the Hindus used to interpose hindrances on inter-caste marriage, endogamous marriage and widow-marriage. But all these were current among the Muslims. To the Hindus the marriage tie was eternal. The Muslims used to accept divorce or break in marriage relationship, and remarriage of women. In matters relating to food and scrupulous decision about one's food, there were restrictions among the Hindus on community dinner without distinction of caste and creed and on taking beef. But both

these were current among the Muslims. Besides these there were numerous differences between the two communities as regards the style of greeting (salutation), dress, cremation or burial of the dead, the law of succession, the manner of calculating time, music before mosque and other matters.

In practice, of course, the Muslim sultans used to approve of many Hindu legal matters, social customs and manners and division of property. Though against Islamic customs the Sultans did not prohibit some Hindu social and religious ceremonies, e.g. worship and sacrifice in public, in temples, processional march of idols and images, *Kirtan* (devotional songs) on public thoroughfares, cremation of the dead in public, sale of wine, partaking of meat of tortoise and pork.[27]

4. Political Relations

A bitter enmity was also seen in the political relations between the two communities. This tradition kept the communal gulf wide open. The glory of one,—e.g. the stories of triumphs, the killings of Hindus and their enslavement constituted a source of shame and humiliation of the other. The breaking of idols and destruction of temples, which were proper and glorious to one was to the other despicable, and considered to be a sacrilege or desecration. Naturally Muslim historians loved to give glaring descriptions of such frightful and shocking achievements, as these were inspired by the basic principle of *jihad* 'effort for Islam'. Such deeds of the conquerors appeared clearly to the Hindus to be violent, oppressive, horrid and profane and they endeavoured to avenge themselves. Maharana Kumbha used to imprison Muslim women and destroyed one mosque: Medini Rai of Chanderi in Malwa enslaved Muslim and Sayyid women; and the rajas of Vijayanagar used to kill and plunder the Muslims. Of course only few such recorded examples of revenge are available.[28]

27. R.C. Majumdar ed. *Delhi Sultanate.*
28. *Tarikh i Wassaf* E & D. iii. 42-44; iv, 447; Ferishta; *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, iii. 597; see R.C. Majumdar, *Delhi Sultanate* for instances.

5. Extent and significance of intolerance and oppression

Regarding the extent of the intolerance of the Muslims and their oppression on the Hindus during the early medieval period. the materials that we get are of two kinds. So, in order to assess the significance of that oppression it is necessary to consider both sides of the picture, otherwise the conclusion would not be impartial.

In the travel account of Ibn Battuta during the 14th century we generally get information about forcible conversion, mass enslavement and giving a lower status to the Hindus as *zimmis* and other oppressions and accounts of quarrels between the Hindus and the Muslims.[29] In contemporary Indian literature, too, we get many instances of oppression on the Hindus by the Muslims, as for example, in Kashmir, in some parts of the Deccan and in Bengal. Here we will refer only to Bengal.

In some parts of religious literature of medieval Bengal there are accounts of Muslim oppression on the Hindus and their miserable condition. Jayananda in his *Chaitanyamangal* (before A.D. 1485) has referred to the Sultan's oppression on the Brahmanas of Nadia (notwithstanding repairs of broken houses and temples), permanent quarrels between the *Yavanas* and the *Brahmanas* and the loss of caste of the latter.[30] Vijaygupta, too, in his *Manasā-Mangal or Padma Purāna*, has spoken of the oppressions of Hasan and Husain, two *qazis* of Alauddin Husain Shah (1493-1519), unknown to sober history. The Hindus had their caste defiled; the sacred thread was torn: and spittle was thrown into the mouth of the Hindus. Hindu boys were deprived of their castes. Men with *tulasi* leaves were beaten.[31] A contemporary of Husain Shah, Ishāna Nāgara, in his *Advaita Prakash* has left accounts of defilement of the Hindus of that time, breaking of images, urinating on *tulasi* and desecration of temples.[32]

29. *Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, GOS. cxxii, 128, 63, 123, 151; 241; 162-3; 228; 27; 124, 163, 185, 188, 196; 182; XXXIV, 151-7, 183.
30. Jayananda, *Chaitanya Mangal*; Dineshchandra Sen, *Bangabhasa O Sahitya*, 6th ed. 319-20.
31. Vijayagupta, *Manasamangal* (Padmapuran), p. 54 & ff.
32. Ishan, *Advaita Prakash*, Ch. 9, p. 39.

The two biographies of Chaitanyadeva, *Chaitanya Bhāgvata* of Brindavandas and *Chaitanyacharitāmrita* of Krishnadas, have also recorded instances of religious bigotry of the Muslims and accounts of oppressions on the Hindus. From these we come to know that though the *qazi* prohibited Chaitanyadeva from singing *kirtans* on the road, the latter defied the order. On viewing the vast concourse following him the *qazi* retreated out of fear and desisted only after discussion with Chaitanya. At last the Sultan, too, forbade the *qazi* to inflict any harm on him.[33]

A few distinguished writers in modern times have, by citing examples of occasional oppression on the Hindus in Husain Shah's time, sought to prove that his religious policy was tainted with bigotry. The severe criticism of the Sultan made by the deceased savant, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, deserves special attention. He even thinks that the eulogies (*prasasti*) lavished on such a Sultan by Bengali poets,—e.g. *nripatitilak* (the chief king), '*Krishna-avatar*' (Krishna-incarnate), *jagat-bhusana* (ornament of the world), signify a degraded mentality and moral ruin of the Hindus.[34] The illustrations, at first sight, i.e. taken out of the context, do certainly bear evidence of oppression, but their interpretation will be different, when considered in the background of the events. (1) To incite the Sultan (i.e. Husain Shah) against Subuddhi Ray, the former's *begum* left no stone unturned. Repeatedly the Sultan countered her requests with reason. Finally, the Sultan, it is true, outraged Subuddhi's religion. But from the details of the story it is abundantly clear that the patience, gratitude and sober sense of the Sultan had to bend before the strong desire of revenge on the part of his wife. (2) In the Orissa campaign of Husain Shah, temples were of course destroyed, and this is referred to in the source materials of Orissa. Certainly such a work was bound to cut Hindus to the quick. Nevertheless, on behalf of Husain Shah it may be said that in the war-time din and bustle the temples of the enemy might easily or could have been destroyed. Sanatan, the loyal Hindu official of the Sultan, was imprisoned for refusing to accompany him to Orissa for destroying temples and breaking images. Of this event there is, besides the religious aspect, the official service side. Sanatan might have been imprisoned for insubordination. Subsequently both he and his brother, Rup, being disgusted with the Sultan, became the followers of Chaitanyadeva.[35] (3) Jayananda writes that the Sultan oppressed the Hindus of Nadia. The event was like this. Some attendants of the Sultan informed him that the Brahmanas of Nadia would forcibly occupy the throne of Gauda. Brindaban Das also says that they also believed that a Brahman would sit on the throne of Gauda. Hence for political reasons it was most natural for the Sultan to curb this seditious idea of the Brahmanas. The angry Sultan gave orders for destruction of Nadia. About this time there was excessive oppression there, the religious activities and ceremonies of the Hindus were obstructed, and their normal livelihood became paralysed. Sārvabhauma Bhattacharya left for Varanasi, his brother, Vidyavachaspati remained at Gaur. But it has to be admitted in defence of the Sultan that this oppression was only on the Brahmanas and not on other communities.[35a] Hence this repressive policy was not moti-

33. Krishnadas, *Chaitanyacharitamrita*, Adi, Ch. 17, p. 122 & ff.; Madhya, Ch. 1, p. 138; Ch. 19, p. 326; Brindavandas, *Chaitanya-bhagvat*, Ch. 23, p. 271 & ff.; Anta, Ch. 4, p. 358.

34. There is considerable difference of opinion about Sultan Husain Shah. Many have blamed him as intolerant and oppressive. During his reign the *qazis* and *mullahs* committed several acts of oppression (see Chaitanya *Charitamrita*). The Chaitanya Bhagvat of Brindavandas contains a referenee (Anta, Ch. 4; p. 426) to the destruction of Hindu temples in Orissa. The *Madla Panjika* refers to the destruction of Puri (A.D. 1509) by Ismail Ghazi. Among historians who are critics of the Sultan are Rajanikanta Chakravarty (*Gauder Itihas*, Vol. 2); Rakhaldas Banerji (Banglar Itihas, Vol. 2); Dinesh Chandra Sen. Hist. Beng. Lang. & lt ; R.C. Majumdar (ed.) *Delhi Sultanate* ; *Hist. Med. Bengal.* On the other hand some have described him as liberal-minded and benevolent towards the people. Habibullah in Sarkar, ed. *Hist. Bengal*, ii; M.R. Tarafdar, *Husain Shahi Bengal.*

35. Subuddhi Ray Incident, see f.n. 19 ante; Orissa—f.n. 34; Sanatan—*Chaitanyacharitamrita*, Madhya, Ch. 19, p. 326. After becoming a devotee of Sri Chaitanya, Sanatan used to be frequently absent from his official duties on the pretext of illness. This was detected during a surprise check by the Sultan, who had him confined.

35a. Jayananda, *Chaitanya Mangal*, 11-12; Vrindabandas, *Chaitanya Bhagvat*, 18, 75. If, as Jayananda says, this oppression took place

vated by any religious or communal bigotry. It is in this background that at the uncommon influence of Sri Chaitanya at Nadia the rulers became afraid. His opponents used to hold out threats of official punishments to his followers in order to stop *kirtans*.

Some say 'O Brother! A calamity has befallen us. The country is going to rack and ruin for Sribāsa. Today I heard every thing in the *diwan* (i.e. office). Two boats have come here at the king's command. On hearing that a special *kirtan* was going to be held, the king ordered the singers to be caught. The rumour spread from town to town that royal boats are coming to arrest Vaishnavas.'[36]

It may be said against the view of Acharya Majumdar that in those days it was customary for litterateurs to sing the praises of reigning kings, and that it does not necessarily prove moral lapse. There are numerous precedents in Sanskrit literature of olden times. There are many examples in the medieval period also. For argument's sake it can reasonably be said that the unfettered praises lavished on the Muslim rulers of Bengal by contemporary Hindu poets would go against the view that there was an *eternal* communal tension or clash. This is not to imply that there was no excitement or confrontation; there was: but in fact it was not a long-standing matter. It is to be remembered that Brahmana-Muslim clash and periodical religious riots that occurred were caused at times by the personal whims and religious fanaticism of a few Muslim officers and at other times by social and political factors. Vijayagupta writes in *Manasa Mangala* that the sympathetic *qazi* of village Husainhati had permitted the villagers to perform all ceremonies associated with the worship of the pot of *Manasa* or Snake goddess. But the *mullah* in his overzealousness to spread Islam rebuked him for that reason. So the Brahmanas began to settle down at a distance from the Muslims.

before the birth of Chaitanya, in the time of Jalaluddin Fateh Shah (1481-87), then Husain Shah cannot be held responsible for this. Perhaps when Husain Shah, immediately after his accession, invaded and plundered Gaur, the Hindus were naturally oppressed. See Tarafdar, 65-67.

36. Quoted in Sukumar Sen, *Madhya Yuge Bangla O Bangali*, 25-26.

Vipradas also has drawn a similar picture in *Manasavijaya*.[36a]

Besides literature, the materials obtained from coins and inscriptions also go in favour of Husain Shah. His predecessors used to inscribe the title 'the helper of Islam and the Muslims' on the coins. But he and his successors stopped this practice, though *kalima* continued to be inscribed as an old practice. The *jizya* was not realised in Husain Shahi Bengal. It is not mentioned in Vaishnava literature, which usually refers to Hindu-Muslim clashes. Probably *zakat*, too, was not levied on the Muslims. Hence it may be said that in a considerable measure, Husain Shahi Sultans of Bengal pursued a secular policy.[37]

It is thus seen that there is another side to the picture of social and religious condition of medieval Bengal. Oppression, conversion, destruction of temples and breaking of idols constituted one side. It will not constitute true history if attention is focussed only on one side or if one studies only one-sided sources.

As a matter of fact from incidental references in contemporary literature it is learnt that the history of Hindu-Muslim relations is not the continuous and monotonous account of mere intolerance and different maifestations thereof. Even in Vaishnava literature we get at times a bright picture and a reference to mutual influence in the field of livelihood.[38] It is easily discernible from this that instances of blind bigotry did not happen frequently and that a favourable atmosphere of friendship in society and culture was developing. Perhaps the influence of this current depended on the activities of the Sultan, minister or the pious or saints. Had Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah, Raja Ganesh, Jalaluddin, Alauddin Hussain Shah and a few more sultans not been generally 'sweet and sour' towards the Hindus i.e. generally liberal and sympathetic, this would not have been possible.

Hence the question that arises in the mind is, to what extent did the occasional communal tension or clash,—even though

36a. *Manasamangal*, ed. Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya, 54-61; *Manasavijaya*, ed. Sukumar See, 60-66; See Tarafdar, 341-42.

37. Wright, Catalogue, ii. 154-63. Pl. ii. Pl. ii. no. 52, 57, 66, 68 etc.

38. Dr. R.C. Majumdar also has admitted this. *Delhi Sultanate*.

its result was wholly poisonous and mischievous,—go and how far did the influence of its weight spread? Was the stream of social evolution impeded as a consequence of it?

The contribution of the Sufis to Hindu-Muslim harmony is undeniable. Still it would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that as a result of the exuberance of the Sufis the antipathy of the Muslims towards the monotheism of the Hindus was abated, for there is no evidence. But notwithstanding the occasional or accidental hindrances the general current of life flowed along its two communal streams. In Hindu society numerically the Brahmanas were in a minority, while the low-caste Hindus were in a majority. The social relations between the latter and the Muslims, born of Hindu mothers or their descendants, both residing in the same village or town were likely to be friendly, sincere, neighbourly and full of co-operation. From some instances it is known that it was so.

Position of the Hindus during the Sultanate

Let us first examine the position of the Hindus in the Sultanate. The legal status of the Hindus in an Islamic state has already been discussed earlier. Now it is necessary to examine what the position was in practice.

(*a*) **Appointment of Hindus in state service.**

The late Acharya Ramesh Chandra Majumdar did not attach any importance to the appointment of the Hindus in official posts in the court of the Sultans. He thinks that it was a rare or accidental event. But considering it deeply, it can easily be pondered that this was not the correct position. Apprehending in the beginning of their rule that appointment of the Hindus would be fraught with danger the sultans might have considered expedient on natural grounds to keep them at a distance from official posts. Gradually the feelings of animosity and suspicion towards the Hindus lessened. Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah (1342-57) appointed many Hindus in high government posts, as his co-religionist *amirs* and *jagirdars* used to rebel frequently, and did

not pay the revenue regularly. According to the evidence of Amir Khusrau a Hindu contingent accompanied the Sultan of Gauda in the campaign to Orissa. For these reasons many Hindu *Zamindars* were appointed to collect revenue in Central Bengal. On account of the non-interference of the Sultan in internal administration, too, the traditional administrative system in rural areas remained almost undisturbed. Shamsuddin Ilyas used to depend on a class of *zamindars* known as *Bhuyans* (*Bhaumik*), and after ascending the throne, established a state army under the Bhuyans of North Bengal. In this way they proved to be the right hand of the sultans in government and military organization. They also used to maintain their respective military contingents. The *jagirdar* of pargana Bhaduria (*Bhaturia*), Jagadananda Bhaduri, was the principal *Wazir* of Shamsuddin. His descendants later on became distinguished as 'Ektakia Bhaduri.'[39]

If the hostility towards or suspicion of the Hindus had not abated, the dignity of the Hindu scholar—administrators, that was established in the Gauda court during the reigns of Ganesh (1410-18) and Jalaluddin (1418-33), would not have been maintained as much as possible during the subsequent reigns of the Sultans or Hindus would not have been appointed in counselling the Sultan, administering the kingdom, especially in the revenue department, even in appointment of Hindus in the post of commanders. Brahmanas, Kayasthas, Vaidyas and Hindus of other classes also gained the favour of the king. Muslim titles were awarded to Hindu officials.[40]

Brahmanas

Acharya Brihaspati Misra of Mahintapana had been famous as a scholar and statesman from the time of Ganesh and Jalaluddin. As the minister of more than one ruler of Gauda

39. Amir Khusrau, *Qiran us Sadain*, AS. ms; *Bhuyan*, in Kaliprasanna Ghosh, *Madhyayuge Bangla*, 12-13; *Bhaturia*, in Durgacharan Sanyal *Bangler Samajik Itihas*.

40. Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. 1. *Purbardha*, 93, 102.

he used to give counsel and received many titles.[41] His sons, Visram and Ram and others, became the chief among the sultan's ministers. In the first quarter of the 15th century the right hand of Sultan Jalaluddin was a Hindu minister and general of his, whom the sultan honoured with the title 'Rai Rajyadhar'.[42]

In the field of politics, many Brahmanas were appointed to high posts during the regime of the Husainshāhi Sultans. During the reign of Sultan Husain Shah the two pillars of the kingdom were two Brahman inhabitants of Jessore, belonging to Bharadwaj *gotra*, vastly learned and great poets, Sanatan (d. c. 1558) and his brother Rup. Sanatan was *Dabir-khās* (private secretary) and Rup was *Sākar Mallik*.[43] Their brother, Anup (Anupam, also known as Ballabh) was the Superintendent of the mint (*mudir i zarb*; in Bengali *jabar*). Their other relations also were high government officials, as for example the brother of the wife of Sanatan.[44] If we accept the evidence of Jayananda's *Chaitanyamangala* it will appear that perhaps Husain Shah's love of Hindus was only a political manoeuvre, motivated by need; but the appointment of Hindus to very confidential and secret posts would go against the assumption that it was merely a device.[45]

41. *Titles*-Kavichakravarti, Rajpandit, Panditsarvabhauma, Kavipandit-chudamani, Mahacharya, Raimukut; *Presents*—necklace, ear-ring, *ratanchur* (jewelled ornament worn on ten fingers on both hands), umbrella and horse.

42. His name is not known as the ms. is worm-eaten, but his father's name was Jagdatta. Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge Bangla O Bangali*, 8-13.

43. Their ancestors were rulers or *bhumipatis* in *Karnat desa*. Rupeshwar, deprived of his right came to Sikharabhum and settled there. His son Padmanabha, on being requested by Danujmardan, resided at Navahattak (Naihati) village. His youngest son Mukunda had a son named Kumar, who had three sons—Sanatan, Rup and Ballabh. Ballabh's son was Jiva. Sumumar Sen, *Madhya Yuge Bangle O Bangali*, 14-15; *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, Purbardha, 292.

44. Rajani Kanta Chakravarti, *Gauder Itihas*, Vol. I, pp. 104-11.

45. Chaitanyamangal by Jayananda ; Sarkar ed. *Hist. Bengal.* ii. 151. (Habibullah).

Kayasthas:

Next to the Brahmans, the right and influence of the Kayasthas was established in government offices, and control of the army and ruling the country; but mostly in high and low government offices especially revenue department and management of *zamindaris*. Ruknuddin Bārbak Shah (1459-c. -1474) conferred the title 'Gunaraj Khan' on his chief officer, Mālādhar Basu of Kulingrām. His descendants were appointed in the Gauda court for long years. About the 'Bakhshis' with Basu endings of Kulingrām, Ruparam has observed in his *Dharmamangal*. 'All the Kayastha clerks are engaged in reading and writing. Krishnadas Kaviraj also writes that as Sanatan almost gave up his official duties, for indifference to the world, the "Lev (?) Kayasthas were performing the government duties."[46] It is known from 'Rajmala' that Gaur Mallick was a general of Husain Shah's Tripura expedition. Another general (*Laskar ? Sarlaskar*) of his was a *kayastha*, Ramachandra Khan, the governor of the southern areas of the kingdom. During the dangerous times of the conflict between the Sultan and Prataparudra of Orissa, it was with the help of Ramachandra that Sri Chaitanya crossed the frontier *via* Chhatrabhog and went to Nilachal. Husain Shah's *wazir* was Gopinath Basu entitled 'Purandar Khan', a Dakhinrahri inhabitant of Burdwan, belonging to the Basu family.[47]

The Kayasthas were so influential on account of their craftiness and strength that the rulers did not easily torture them

46. Habibullah in *Hist. Bengal*, ii. 135; Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge Bangla O Bangali*, 15.

47. Habibullah in *ibid.* 151-2; Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, Rajani Chakravarti, Vol. 2, 104.

Ramchandra Khan at first sought to dissuade Chaitanyadeva. Both the states had their poles implanted. Travellers were put to death on suspicion of being spies (*jāsus*).

For the officials employed in such state services see Brindavandas, *Sri Chaitanya Bhagvat*, p. 8, 82 (Adi); 205 (Madhya); 316, 350 (Antya); Krishnadas Kaviraj, Chaitanyacharitamrita, 76, 278, 293. Sukhamoy Mukhopadayaya (pp. 264-84) has mentioned 17 Hindu officials appoined by Husain Shah.

notwithstanding their faults; especially they were inwardly afraid of the *kayastha* profession; outwardly they raged and stormed but feared within to strike.[48]

Other communities

Even people of other communities used to get opportunities of securing government posts. The community that was able to perpetuate its power and dignity in the Gauda court was the Vaidya. Afraid of conspiracies in the palace and in the seraglio, the Sultans never appointed any one as their personal physician except trusted Vaidyas. Of these some were descendants of the *Rajvaidyas* of Pala and Sena periods. As in the past their title was *Antaranga* (intimate). The chief physican of Husain Shah was Mukunda Das. Many vaidyas of Srikhanda area of Burdwan district were employed in the Gauda government, as for example the great poet Damodar entitled 'Yasoraj Khan' and his daughter's son Govindadas Kaviraj.

Among the Chhatris the name of Keshav Chhatri, the bodyguard of Husain Shah, deserves mention.

Among merchants Sultan Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah (1475-81) conferred on an officer of his court, Kuladhar, a merchant of Varendra *visaya*, first the title 'Satya Khan' and then 'Shubharaj Khan'.[49]

(b) Court-patronised literature and cultural centres.

The first two hundred years after the conquest of Bengal constituted an age of anarchy and annoyance. Towards the end of the fourteenth century with the setting up of the inde-

48. Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge Bangla O Bangali*, 16.
Chaitanyacharitamrita mentions a class of *Zamindars* known as *majmu'adars*. Previously the revenues collection of the *khas* property of the *Chaudhury* of Saptagram was farmed out to Hiranya Das and his younger brother Govardhan. The income was 20 lakhs and the revenue payable to the government was 12 lakhs. When the helpless Chaudhury complained to the Wazir, Hiranya and Govardhan fled but the latter's son, Raghunath Das was arrested and he was commanded to produce his *bāp—jethā* (father and uncle).

49. Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, 16-17; Sarkar, ed. *Hist. Beng.*, ii. 152-2.

pendent Ilyas Shahi Sultanate dynasty in Bengal and with the establishment of peace, an atmosphere was created, favourable for the development of education, literature and culture. In the Sultanate period Bengal was isolated from cultural contact with Islam. Though the Persian language was the state language it was not enriched by any stream from Persia or from North India. Many sultans and administrators loved to hear recitals of Pauranik stories from the court *pandit*. So in Bengal Sanskrit, the popular Puranas and cultivation of general literature received the patronage of the rulers,—the sultan and the officers. In the words of Professor Sukumar Sen, 'It is no exaggeration to describe the Pauranik Bengali literature of the medieval age to be principally sheltered by the royal court'. The source of the story 'Krishnalila' was, beside the Sanskrit Puranas (*Harivamsa*, *Vishnupurana* etc), regional popular stories dealing with the love-play of Radhakrishna. Most probably Srimad-Bhagvatpurana was not current in Bengal before 14th century; and during the middle of that century it was Madhavendra Puri who spread the *Bhagvat* (Sen). At first it was among the officers of Gauda *darbar* that the Bhagvat was first appreciated. Maladhar Basu composed 'Srikrishna Vijaya' principally on the basis of Srimad Bhagvata. Bhagvata was written also for Sanatan.[50]

In the 15th century at the request of Jadu named Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah (1418-33) the Hindu chief Minister and General, Acharya Kavichakravarty Brihaspati Mishra composed *Smriti Ratnahar*. The Sultan honoured the poet's intellect in a special way.[51] Vishram and Ram and other sons of his became famous in their homeland and outside as vastly learned scholars and as kings of poets.[52]

50. Sen, *op. cit.*, 5,17.
Sarbananda's *Tika-sarvasva*, written in the middle of 12th century mentions many *puranas* but not the Bhagvat. It does not find mention in Brihaspati's *Padachandrika*, too.

51. Other works of Brihaspati are–(i) *Byākhyā Brihaspati*, commentary on *Raghuvamsa* and Kumarsambhava; (ii) *Nirnaya—Brihaspati—Sisupalabadh tika*; (iii) *Padachandika*—commentary on Amarkosha (1353 Saka/1431-2).

52. Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge Bangla O Bangali*, 8-13.

That some sultans of Gaud considered the patronage of poets and scholars as royal duties, was, perhaps due to the influence of Hindu officials. Generally a Sultan used to honour a poet and scholar with titles like 'Subharaj Khan', 'Gunaraj Khan', 'Yasoraj Khan' etc. The word 'khan' means 'thakur' or 'mahasaya'. Later it was changed to 'Ray Khan'. In return for the award of the title the poets or scholars used to express their gratitude by singing the praises of the sultan.[53]

Sultan Barbak Shah Ilyasi (1459-74) honoured Maladhar Basu with the title 'Gunaraj Khan' for his *Srikrishnavijaya*, (1395-1402/1473-80) which is a translation in Bengali of the tenth and eleventh canto of *Srimad Bhagvat*. His son was entitled 'Satya Raj' and 'Satya Khan'. Perhaps Krittibas, too, gained his patronage.

Sultan Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah Ilyasi (1474-82) conferred on his officer Kuladhar the title 'Satyakhan' and later 'Subharaj Khan'. With the help of Govardhan Pathak he compiled a book, which was a collection of *Purana* and *Smriti*, named *Purana—Sarbasva* (Saka 1396/1474-75).

Several officers of Sultan Husain Shah (1493-1519) were poets and scholars. Among them Sanatan, Rup, Keshav Khan Chhatri and Ramchandra Khan deserve mention. Damodar 'Yasodhar Khan' has referred to Husain Shah in his epic *Krishnamangal*. His daughter's son Govindadas Kaviraj has earned renown as a composer of verses.[54] The case of Mālādhar Basu of Kulingrām has already been mentioned.[55] The name of Husain Shah is mentioned in the colophon of the epic *Manasamangal* (1417/1495) of the Brahman Vipradas.[56] Vijayagupta of Fullasri village included in the Fatehabad *sarkar* composed *Manasamangal* (1406/1484).

Sultan Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah (1519-33), son of Husain Shah, was the patron of Devakinandan Singha entitled 'Kavise-

53. Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, Purbardha, 102.
54. Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge* etc. 16-17.
55. D.C. Sen, Hist. Beng. Lang. Lit. 222.
56. JASB (N.S.) V. 253.

khar'[57] Sultan Alauddin Firuz Shah (1532-33), son of Nusrat, had the poem *Vidyasundar* composed by Sridhar Brahman. Its theme was the diffusion of the greatness of the worship of Chandi or Kali. In this way the sultan used to patronise Hindu culture.

In Chatigaon (Chittagong) Laskar Paragal Khan the commander (*Pratirāj*) of Husain Shah and his son Nusrat (Chhuti) Khan used to patronise Bengali poets with a view to building up a cultural atmosphere similar to that in Gauda. Under the patronage of Paragal Khan Parameshwar *kavindra* (the king of poets) rendered the first Bengali translation of the *Mahabharata* (from *Adi parva* to *Stri parva*).[58] During the reign of Nusrat Shah, son of Husain Shah, Srikara Nandi translated the *Aswamedha parva* of the *Mahabharata* from the longer story of *Jaimini Samhita* at the order of Chhuti Khan, son of Paragal,[59] as Chhuti was not satisfied with the cryptic version of Parameshwar. But this endeavour of father and son was not crowned with success on account of the want of a fit poet-scholar. Except translation no independent work was written.

The Bengali translations of three holy scriptures, the *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Srimad Bhāgvata* are like the symbols of the pre-eminence of the popular culture as pictured in the mother-tongue. These fulfilled the mental demands of both communities, the Hindus and the Muhammadans. Not to speak of the influence of Parameshwar's Paragali *Mahābhārata* on the contemporary Bengali Hindu, even on the Muhammadan community it was so great that the contemporary famous writer Sayyid Sultan noted that (besides the Hindus) the Muslims used to read it in every home and that none remembered Allah and His Prophet. The entire Muslim populace knew only Bengali; being wholly ignorant of Arabic and Persian, they had no knowledge of Islamic religious books. It will not be an exaggeration to say that their mental background was more Hindu than Muslim. There is no doubt that in the light of the then Bengal's geographical, political and cultural separatism, not many compositions

57. Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge* etc., 18.
58. D.C. Sen, *op. cit.*. 202 and n; Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*
59. D.C. Sen, *op. cit.* 204.

had been made in Islamic subjects. Yet the religious, spiritual and mental needs of the Muslims of the first age required to be satisfied [60]. Gradually the immigrant Muslims became Bengalicised and began to leave their own contributions in Bengali language and literature by writing books or poems. The consequences of this will be discussed later,

After the close of the Bengal Sultanate, at scattered places of Bengal's frontier in the courts of Hindu and Muslim rulers the pursuit of Pauranic and romantic poetry went on unhindered from mid-16th century.[61] It was an attempt to re-kindle the extinguished flame of the lamp of literature of the court of Gauda. Even in the courts of Muslim rulers there were poet—scholars as in Hindu courts. Mathuresh was the court *pandit* of Masnad-i-Ali Musa Khan, son of Isa Khan and grandson of Sulaiman Khan Karrani. He has repeatedly praised Musa Khan and his brothers (Muhammad Khan, Abdullah Khan) in the introduction and conclusion of his work *Abhidhansabda—ratnavali.*

About the middle of the seventeenth century many accomplished Bengalis got shelter in the court of Rosang (Arakan). In particular two famous Muslim poets, Daulat Kazi and Sayyid Alaol enhanced the glory of the court and created noteworthy literature.[62] The ms. of a poem *Vidyasundar* written by

60. Karim, *Social History*, 67f., 97 f.

61. Kamata-Kamrup, Tripura, Kachar, Darrang, Mallabhum, Dhalbhum—feudatory in name but actually independent or aspiring to independence. Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge* etc. 20-1; *Islami Bangla Sahitya* (17th century).

62. Daulat Kazi, on being requested by Ashraf Khan, *lashkarwazir* of the king of Arakan, Sri Sudharma, followed the Awadhi or Bhojpuri original of Poet Sadhan's *Maina Sat* in his *Sati Maynamati/ Lor Chaudrani.* The lowest date limit of composition is A.D. 1638. Incomplete.

The real name of Alaol (Al Awwal, first) is submerged below the Arabic *Takhallus.* He was a son of a minister of Majlis Qutb, the lord of Jalalpur in Fatehabad pargana, of Faridpur district (*Saiful mulk*). In one chapter of his life full of diversity he received shelter from the Prince (the adopted son of the daughter of king

another Muslim poet, named Sabirid Khan, a predecessor of these (perhaps end of 16th century) has been found. It is these Muslim poets who introduced poems with romantic stories in Bengali literature,

Cultural centres:

During the Sultani regime in the fifteenth century there were a few centres of Brahman culture. The Muslims, though occasionally anti-Hindu, did not inflict any harm to these centres.

(i) Ramakeli village[63] was situated on the bank of the Bhagi-

Chandehur (1645-52), sister and half sharer of Sudharma) and the principal noble Magan Thakur. Alaol composed several works;

(*i*) *Padmavati* written (1651) at the request of Magan is his best work. It is the Bengali translation of *Padumavat* of the Hindi poet, Malik Muhammad Jayasi. Some change has taken place in the original Awadhi, as the actors and actresses are cast as far as possible in Bengali mould.

(*ii*) After the death of Magan he got shelter in the court of Mahapatra Sulaiman, minister of Srichandra Sudharma (1652-64). At his order Alaol composed the second part or supplement of the incomplete, *Sati Mayna* of Dault Qazi (1658).

(*iii*) The Bengali translation (1659) of the Persian *Saifulmuluk Badiuzzamal* (n ?) and translation of its concluding part (1669).

(*iv*) *Saptapayakar*, the Bengali translation (1660) of *Haft Paikar* of the renowned Persian poet Nizami Ghaznavi.

(*v*) Bengali translation (1671) of Nizami's *Sikandarnama.*

(*vi*) Bengali translation (1664) of the principles of true knowledge continued in *Tohfa* of the Persian poet, Yusuf Gada.

(*vii*) A few songs on the theme of Radha and Krishna.

Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya, p. 109; Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge* etc. 21.

63. Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, 23-24; *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*. Vol. I, Purbardha, 96-100.

Chaturbhuj composed *Haricharit* in Sanskrit 1415 Saka/1493. This deals with *Krishnalila* and is an epic in 14 cantos. Rup Goswami collected slokas on *Krishnalila* by numerous local poets in his *Padavali.* His *Uddhab-Sandesh* and a few other works were written here.

In this region *Krishnalila* was depicted in images also. In village Kanai Natshola Sri Chaitanya was pleased to see the Krishnalila depicted in paintings and architecture.

rathi near Gauda. It was the principal place of the cultivation of the love of Krishna, the residence of Rup, Sanatan and other high officials and Vidya Vachaspati, brother of Sārbhauma Bhattacharya, devoted to Sri Chaitanya, poet Chaturbhuj and other poets. Sanatan used to honour Vidya Vachaspati like his *guru*. That Sultan Husain Shah also honoured him is known from his grandson Rudra Nyaya Vachaspati's poem *Bhramarduta* (*'Gauda kshitipatishikhā ratnaghristaghnirenu'*).

(ii) Navadwip-Santipur.[64] Many *pandits*, of course, were honoured by contact with the royal court. But the common people did not come close to them. Hence the learned people of the whole of Bengal used to reside at Navadwip or Santipur. Of them many were sheltered by rich *zamindars*, many were patronised by devout wealthy men, others were again, wholly destitute. Brindavan Das described the wealth and grandeur of Navadwip at the point of transition from the 15th to the 16th century.

In the unsullied atmosphere of poverty Navadwip-Santipur came to be considered as the principal centre of the cultivation of *Navya Nyaya* and of *Smriti-Sāstra* during 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. After the firm establishment of Mughal rule the authority and influence of the frontier princes and local *zamindars* declined. Sanskrit learning centring round Navadwip spread along the bank of the Ganges. It is not that there were no famous *pandits* in other regions of the country. About the middle of the 17th century Ruparam Chakravarty was commanded by his *guru* to go to Nawadwip, Santipur or Jaugram to complete his education (Ātmakathā). In the eighteenth century Dinajpur, Vikrampur, Sonargram, Bahadurpur, Nasigram and others earned renown as centres of Sanskrit learning besides Navadwip and Santipur.[65]

(c) Hindu styles in Muslim courts.

In the courts of the Muslim Sultans the styles of the Hindu

64. Sukumar Sen, *Madhyyyuge* etc., 24.
65. In 1225 B.S./1818 a big assembly to decide the pros and cons of *Svakiya* and *Parakiya* was convened. The two sides brought their respective witnesses from the above place.

regime were somewhat maintained. Among the officers appointed in the revenue department, two kinds of titles, old and new, were current. Among the old were *niyogi* and *chaudhury*. In the language of Mukundaram 'I am neither *niyogi*, nor *chaudhuri*, nor do I enjoy any *taluk*.' Among the new were *Shiqdar*, *dihidar*, *majumdar*, *bakhshi* etc.

In dress Muslim influence was felt. In the royal court Hindu *rajahs* and (western) commanders began to wear Muslim dress. In war, *pugree* (turban), *izār* (*ijār* in Bengali, trousers), and *qābā* (*qābāi* in Bengali, long coat) were the usual dress. In describing Lausen, about to march Ruprami writes: He donned a fine *ijār* (trousers) named Meghmala, wore *qābāi* (coat) that brightened up the landscape, covered his feet with strip of bandage and fastened his *Knmarbaod* waistband.[66]

(d) Hindu-Muslim Relations,—in towns and villages.

From the scattered references in contemporary literature it becomes abundantly clear that there was some difference in nature between Hindu-Muslim relations in towns and villages. Usually the Hindus and the Muslims in the village used to spend their time peacefully. The Brahman pandits, of course, used to avoid *mlechcha* customs but maintain friendly and cordial relations with the village Muslims. When an angry Sri Chaitanya along with followers, raided the qazi's house in Nadia, the latter referred to his friendly relations with Chaitanya's maternal grandfather, Nilambar Chakravarty.

"গ্রাম-সম্পর্কে চক্রবর্তী হয় মোর চাচা,
দেহ-সম্বন্ধ হইতে হয় গ্রাম-সম্বন্ধ সাঁচা।
নীলাম্বর চক্রবর্তী হয় তোমার নানা,
সে সম্বন্ধে হও তুমি আমার ভাগিনা।"[67]

66. See Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, 8-13, 32, 33-37.
67. *Op. cit.*, 24-29. Qazi's utterance, *Chaitanya-Charitamrita*, Adi, 17, 65.

In other words, according to village relationship Sri Chaitanya was the nephew of the *Qazi*, as Chaitanya's maternal grandfather Nilambar Chakravarty, was his 'Chacha' (i.e. uncle) and village relationship was purer or truer than even blood relationship. Acharya Ramesh Chandra Majumdar has ridiculed the *qazi's* utterance.[68] Of course it is true that the *qazi* has referred to the village relationships for self-defence, but it is also true that notwithstanding religious and social separation, village relationship is not a matter of ironical contempt.

Another facade of this incident deserves attention. Did the Sultan promulgate the order of prohibition of Sri Chaitanyadeva's *kirtan*? or did the *Qazi* do so on his own? If the Sultan had issued the order, then why did he not protect the *Qazi* from Chaitanya Deva's passive resistance? This means that the Sultan did not give the order. In fact overzealous, oppressive Muslim officers were not wanting at any time,—in Sultani regime or in Aurangzeb's time. Such officers, blinded by religious bigotry, without considering all sides, plunged into action. This is why the wise Sultan did not support the *Qazi*. And often cases of oppression occurred without the knowledge of the Sultan. The *Chaitanya Bhagvat* gives a brief picture of an oppressive officer, as a result of whose activities Gangādās Pandit had, for fear of the *mlechachas*, to flee with his entire family.[69]

That Hindu-Muslim relationship was more friendly in the village than in the town is hinted at in several matters. (i) Many Muslims retained their Hindu names even after conversion. A Muslim woman named Bibi Mālati built a mosque and a shed for drinking water.[70] A Muslim weaver went by the name of Shubhodhan.[71] Even after conversion they did not change their earlier names. (ii) The Muslims used to join Hindu social functions. Even the processions in the marriages of rich Hindus, which were not attended by Muslims were not considered to be

68. R.C. Majumdar, *Hist. Medieval Bengal.*

69. *Chaitanya Bhagvat*, quoted in Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge* etc., 26.

70. Malda Inscription 938/1531 (JASB. 1874, p. 305), Gaud Inscription 941/1536 (JASB 1872. 339).

71. Bijay Gupta, *Manasamangal* 59.

complete.[72] (iii) Even though the *qazi* banned the Vaishnava *Sankirtans* at times, these were enjoyed by the Muslims.[73] (iv) As some professions were monopolised by the Muslims, everybody including the Brahmanas had to come into contact with them. As the *kirtan* festival of Sri Chaitanya was held in the house of Sribāsa Pandit, his *yavana* tailor (Muslim), too, received the saint's favours along with the latter's family and servants. (v) The Hindus appointed in the army or local *diwan* (*cutchery*) as *shiqqdār* or *kotwāl* had to adopt Muslim education and behaviour. The prophecy of Jayanand served to indicate the true identity of many Hindus of those days.

" ব্রাহ্মণে রাখিবে দাড়ি পারস্য পড়িবে,
মোজা পা-এ (পায়ে) নড়ি হাথে কামান ধরিবে
মসনবি আবৃত্তি করিবে কোন জন ..... "

The Brahmans will retain beards and read Persian: with socks on their feet and stick in hand, will man a cannon. A few will recite the *masnavi.*

The conduct of the *kotwals* of Navadwip, two brothers Jagāi and Mādhāi, though sons of Brahmanas, was reprehensible. Jayanand writes.

মসনবি আবৃত্তি করে থাকে নলবনে।"

(By reciting *masnavi* they stay in forest of reeds.) Brindabandas also writes about them:

" দেয়ানে নাহিক দেখা বোলায় কোটাল,
মদ্যমাংস বিনা আর নাহি যায় কাল।
ছাড়িল গোষ্ঠীয়ে বড় দুর্জ্জন দেখিয়া,
মদ্যপের সঙ্গে বুলে স্বতন্ত্র হইয়া।
এই দুই দেখিয়া সব নদীয়া ডরায়,
পাছে কারো কোনদিন বসতি পোড়ায়।" 74

72. *Op. cit.*, 179.

73. Vrindabandas, Chaitanyabhagvat, Adi, 17, 67.

(The Kotwals are not visible in office. They call (people to them). Their time does not pass without wine and meat. Their kinsmen, finding them to be villains, have forsaken them. They talk to the drunkards as if they were separate. By seeing these two the whole of Nadia is afraid lest they set fire to the house of anyone anyday.[74])

74. See Sukumar Sen, *Madhayuge etc.* 26-27.

3

Evidence of Administration

One of the best ways of knowing what form the Hindu-Muslim relations in medieval India actually took was to analyse the administrative structure. Whatever the Islamic Law might say, the situation was different in practice. In Sind the administrative system of the Arabs was based on toleration.[75] In the Turko-Afghan administration the influence of the *Ulema* (i.e. of religious bigotry) was very strong. But Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughlaq ignored them. In Bengal the keenness of the clash and confrontation of the initial years of the Muslim conquest gradually decreased. The good administrator, Mughisuddin Tughril (Tughral) (1268-81) was the first to organise a national army. The Hindus and the Muslims of the land, irrespective of caste and religion, fought against the invading Sultan of Delhi, Balban, and extremely harassed him.[76]

Tughril, it is true, did plunder Jajnagar according to the dictates of the Muslim state, but there is no account of plunder

75. Camb. Hist. India, Vol. 3 (S. Chand edn.); H.C. Ray, *Dynastic History of India*, Vol. I, Ch. 1. (Sind).

76. *Tarikh i Firoz Shahi*; Sarkar (ed.), *Hist. Bengal*, 11. 61.

in his Tripura expedition, perhaps because it was the kingdom of his friend Ratan-Fa, the founder of the Tripura royal dynasty. In return for the gift of a jewel by Ratan-Fa, the Sultan conferred on him the title of "*Manikya*" (jewel).[77] It has been said before that during the reign of Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah (1342-57) he appointed Hindus in administration and the army. Even his chief *Wazir* was the *Jāgirdar* of Bhaduria (Bhaturia) *parganah*, Jagadananda Bhaduri., Husain Shah, too, continued this liberal policy and appointed Hindus in many confidential and loyal state works. This goes against the legal theory.[78]

As an example of a glaring instance of hostility of the Muslims towards the Hindus, the late Ramesh Chandra Majumdar has referred to Raja Ganesh and observed, (*i*) that during the 600-years long Muslim rule only one Hindu ascended the throne of Gauda and to dethrone him the Muslims of Bengal, specially the chief of the Sufi darweshes (e.g. Nur Qutb Alam), invited the Muslim sultan of Jaunpur; and (*ii*) after the dethronement of Ganesh, his son regained the throne only because of apostacy.[79] Against this view it may be said that (*i*) the true history of Ganesh is still shrouded in darkness. But where the kingdom was not secular, but based on religion and was a Muslim state, there the accession of Hindu Ganesh itself was a remarkable exception and for the Hindus, a matter of creditable achievement in the then state and society. During 200 years of secular British rule, not even one Indian was appointed Viceroy —'Governor-General'. And it is not to be expected that every Sufi would be a protagonist of Hindu-Muslim harmony. That Ganesh had become an object of displeasure of bigoted Sufis, and *ulama* might not have been due to religious difference alone. Its main reason was their self-interest. The wealth and overweening authority of the *shaikhs* and the *mullahs* being about to eclipse the royal power, Ganesh sincerely endeavoured to reduce their authority. And so the orthodox *mullahs* of *Panduah* and Maldah had levelled imaginary calumnies against

77. Sarkar, *op. cit*, 59.
78. Khadduri, Laws of Peace and War.
79. Majumdar, *Hist. Med. Bengal*, 247-8; Sarkar, *op. cit.* Ch. V.

Ganesh as cruel and anti-Muslim. (*ii*) On account of the indecisive war between Jaunpur and Bengal, a treaty was concluded by mutual agreement; and it was according to it, through the instrumentality of Ganesh himself that his son's conversion and accession to the throne were effected. But it was Ganesh who carried on the administration in practice, and the Muslims were so satisfied with his rule that Farishta says that they wanted to have his corpse buried at his death according to Mnslim rites.[80]

Acharya Majumdar has also observed that the sultan grew alarmed at the possibility of even one Hindu getting the throne. But he has cited only one instance (Husain Shah) Agitated at the prophecy of a Brahman becoming king at Nabadwip, Sultan Husain ordered inhuman oppression on the local inhabitants, as mentioned by Jayananda in his *Chaitanya-Mangal*.[81] But there is another side to it. In apprehension of a revolution any ruler, irrespective of caste and creed, would adopt severe measures.

Some historians like Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi and Agha Mehdi Hussain think that the Hindus were happier during Turkish rule than Hindu regime.[82] Of course there is no basis of such a view. As revenue-collector, the Hindu *khut*, *chaudhuri* and *muqaddam* (*mukhia*, *morhol*) were coming down, by hereditary right, from before. Without their co-operation the administration would have been paralysed. It is not known if there was any conspiracy in Bengal against appointment of Hindus, organised by the Muslim administrative oligarchy, like that against Ratan the revenue official in Sind, contemporary of Muhammad Tughlaq.[83] But it is certain that in Bengal the appointment of Hindus was not only in more important posts and also in greater number than in Delhi. Instances have been given before.

In the Mughal age the liberal statesmanship of Akbar and the history of Hindu-Muslim adjustment is known to all, e.g. his *jharokha-i-darshan*, and *Din-i-Ilahi*. His great-grandson, Dara Shukhoh also, inspired by his ideal, sought to effect

80. Ferishta (Lucknow edn.), ii, 297.
81. See Chap. 2.
82. I.H. Qureshi. *Adm. Delhi. Sult.* Agha Mahdi Husain, Tughluq Dynasty.
83. Mahdi Husain. op. cit.

Hindu-Muslim cultural communion, for which he had to pay the price, not only of the throne, but of his life. But in the language of the *Bauls,* 'মন্ত্র ভাসে সাধিন আকাশে' ('The message floats in the firmament of Quest')[84]

Another aspect of the evidence of administration is the nomenclature of the revenue divisions. The '*Ain-i-Akbari*[85] refers to 19 revenue divisions (*sarkars*), existing in the last quarter of the Turko-Afghan Sultanate. Of these 10 are Hindu and 9 are Muslim names. In all there were 652 mahals, most of which had Hindu names. Smaller revenue units like *parganahs, qasbas,* had their Hindu names almost unchanged. The significance of the Hindu nomenclature of the *sarkars* and *mahals* was that it indicates continuance of Hindu culture and contact. At times Hindu or Muslim names were attached with Muslim or Hindu names or words, e.g. Ram + ganj, Raj + Shahi, Muhammad + pur. At other times wholly Muslim names/were used e.g. Fatehabad, Firozabad, Nusratshahi.

84. K.M. Sem,
My "Trends of Cultural contact in Medieval India" (Lectures in The Asiatic Society, 1980, *In Press*).
85. '*Ain-i-Akbari*, Jarrett & Sarkar, ii.
The *Sarkars* with Hindu names,—Lakshanavati (Lakhnauti), Purnea, Tajpur, Srihatta, Sonargaon, Chatigaon, Satgaon, Mandaran, Tanda, Ghoraghat,—total 10. Those with Muslim names—Barbakabad, Mahmudabad, Khalifatabad, Islampur (Bakla), Sulaimanabad, Sumimabad, Nusratshahi, Pinjra, Fatehabad—total 9.

4

Evidence of Society

The evidence gleaned from social conditions throws light on both sides of the picture of Hindu-Muslim relations.

(i) Oppression on Hindu women :

Like every other nation the Hindus, too, fixed the highest price in social life on the purity of character or chastity of women. But there are many instances of outrages, kidnapping, and oppression on Hindu women by the Muhammadans, which embittered the relations between the two communities.[86]

(ii) Muslim-Hindu Marriage relations :

In the first age of invading India the Muslim soldiers did not, for very natural reasons, bring their women with them. In Bengal, too, women were first discarded. Islam does not recognise more than four marriages together. But there was wide latitude for slave girls in society. A principal condition in the post-war treaties

86. Majumdar, *op. cit.* 250.

related to women. All female relations of the defeated enemy constituted the due share of the victor (*ghanimah*). Besides physical need the Muhammadans were attracted to Hindu women, probably because of her mental instincts that divorce was a sin. Besides, marriage with a Hindu woman was a symbol of victory of Islam and extreme insult of the Hindus. Again, at times the conversions were made real by marrying the neo-phyte to a Muslim girl.

During the Turko-Afghan age several Muslim-Hindu marriages worthy of mention took place in Bengal, viz.,

(a) Ilyas Shah (1342-57) and the Brahmana girl, Phulmati of village Vajrayogini in Vikrampur;

(a1) Sultan Sikandar had a Hindu wife, and the future Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah was born of this marriage.

(b) Raja Ganesh and Phuljāni, widow of Sultan Azam Shah;

(c) Jadu Jaimalla (Sultan Jalaluddin) and Āsmāntārā, daughter of Azam Shah;

(d) Husain Shah's daughter and Kandarpadeva, son of Brahman Madan Bhaduri of Bhaturia;

(e) Husain Shah's eleventh daughter and eleventh son of Madan Bhaduri.

(f) Chaturanga Khan, *Wazir* of Husain Khan, married a Muslim lady to complete his conversion. Two sons born of her, Subi Khan and Suchi Khan were appointed *qazis* in Sener Bazar, district Khulna. This family of the *qazis* used to feel pride in its Hindu origin.

(g) In the middle of fifteenth century a Brahman, converted to Islam by Pir Khan Jahan Ali, took the name of Taher Ali. His children by his Hindu wife were known as Pirali Brahmans while those by his Muslim wife came to be known as Taherias.

(h) Pir Khan Jahan Ali married Sonāmani (Sonā Bibi after conversion). After her husband's death she committed suicide in 'Ghoradighi.' His Muslim wife Bāghi Bibi lies buried to the west of that tank.

(i) A *faqir* coming for preaching in Sātkshirā region killed the local ruler Raja Mukut Ray in fight. The king's daughter Champāvati (Maichampā) was compelled to marry the *faqir*. The grave of Champāvati, seven miles away from Satkshira, is held as a pilgrim-spot to both Hindus and Muslims.

(j) Yusuf Shah (1474-81) married a Hindu dancer named Mira whose Muslim name was Lotan Bibi. A temple at Gaud, being converted to a mosque, came to be called Lotan mosque, and the attached tank was named Lotan *dighi*.

(k) Murtaza Khan of Murshidabad married a great Vaishnav lady, Anandamoyee. Their graves are situated side by side. Her devotion to her husband is referred to in numerous doggerel verses and songs.

(l) In the Sunderbans area 'Ghazi Miyanar Biya' (wedding of Ghazi Miyan or Masud Salar Ghazi is a highly popular festival to both the communities. In the *kissa* (anecdote) named 'Kalu Ghazi O Champāvatir Biyā' (wedding of Kalu Ghazi and Champāvati) lie hidden many historical stories.

Among the masses such marriages used to take place on an extensive scale. Behind such incidents it was the role of the conquerors that was worth mention. Perhaps the initial, heart-rending wails of Hindu women used to become gradually hushed. Therefore, it is very difficult to assess how far social union was secured through such intercommunal marriages. The Hindu women could not entirely give up the traditional manners and customs even after their marriage with Muslims. Numerous converted Hindus, too, have largely preserved their religious rites, manners and customs.[87]

(iii) Religion and Society :

In the medieval period both in Asia and Europe religion and society were intimately connected. In India, too, as these were profoundly entangled both among the Hindus and the Muslims, the discussion of one invariably leads to the mention of the other. The differences between the religious and social ceremonies of the two communities have already been referred to. The Hindus observe various ceremonies and customs on the occasion

87. Sushila Mandal, Bangadesher Itihas, Madhya jug, Pratham Parva.

of worship of idols set up in temples and performance of worship of gods and goddesses. On the other hand, the Muslims, by breaking temples and idols, building mosques, prohibiting Hindu religious and social manners and customs or by creating hindrances therein, thought that they were doing a very pious act. The late Acharya Ramesh Chandra Majumdar has shown, after discussing the subject with numerous illustrations that during Muslim rule the Hindus suffered profound agony as a result of such social persecution and naturally cherished malice against the Muslims.[88] In fact this was a unhealthy and baneful result of Muslim rule.

(iv) Mosques and Dargahs :

But there is another side to it. In Islam the mosque is the centre of the religion, society and politics, comparable to the junction of three streams. The construction of a mosque after a victory is a pre-eminent means of proclamation of gratitude to Allah. To defile the temple, *chaitya*, or *vihara* of the unbeliever or raze these and to raise thereon a mosque for the believer and to transform the inner apartments thereof into the sepulchre of the *pirs*, *ghazis* and sultans and *dargahs* both were considered meritorious or pious acts of the faithful. So these are symbols of spread of Islam. Even in such places we often get clear indications of Hindu contact. It has been said before that converted Muslims often felt pride in their earlier Hindu origin,[89] and preserved traditional manners and customs[90]. At times a mosque or a *dargah* bore an older Hindu name. In Maldah Sultan Sikander Shah (1357-99) built the huge Adina mosque (1369).

88. Majumdar, *op. cit.* 248-52.
89. During the reign of Husain Shah a Brahman named Chaturang was converted to Islam and he built a mosque in Sener Bazar gunj of Khulna. His two sons, Subi Khan and Suchi Khan, born of his Muslim wife were the founders of the local Qazi family and took pride in their Brahmanical origin. Compare the attitude of Dr. Iqbal, Obaidullah Sindhi and Zafarullah Khan, who were proud of their Hindu birth and heritage.
90. Very often it was not possible, even after change of religion, to give up the old manners and customs and popular usages. There are many instances of this.

Some say that it was the temple of Adinath or Siva[91]. Here the mosque and *dargah* (*Chota Dargah*) of Nur Qutb 'Alam, one of the organizers of the preaching of Islam in Bengal, a contemporary of Raja Ganesh, that was built on the remains of a temple, is known as Bhāleswari, for she was the presiding deity of the earlier temple. There is a *taluqa* of that name also whose income is spent on the *dargah*. The image of alligator lying by its side, was spared as it was hārām or untouchable. The mosque built at Gauda on the bank of the Bhagirathi by the last Sultan of Ilyasi dynasty, Jalaluddin Fateh Shah (1481-87) is famous as *Gunavant* mosque, as formerly it was a temple built by a Brahman name Gunavanta. The *dargah* of Nimai Shah at Rajshahi is named after the converted Hindu *sannyasi* Nimai. It was constructed on the remains of a Buddhist stupa. The Pāngāpir of Domar village in the district of Rangpur was originally a Hindu *Sannyasi* named Panchānga[92]. The mosque or hermitage of the converted Hindu Vaishanava Gorachand at Haroa village in 24-Parganas is a place of pilgrimage of Hindu and Muslim devotees. So also is the *dargah* and mosque of *Pir Ghazi* Mubarak Ali of Ghutiyari Sharif. The mosque of Purandar Khan or Gopinath Basu built in name of Purandar Khan, *Wazir* of Husain Shah at Mahinagar (Mainagar) near Mullickpur still exists[93]. The 'Tiger-God' of the Sunderbans, Dakshinraya, was a Hindu

91. Sarkar, *Hist. Beng.* ii. Abid Ali Khan, *Memoirs of Gaur & Pandua.* In Malda the *Bara Dargah* was built on the foundation of a large Hindu temple (A.D. 1341) by Ali Mubarak Shah as the *dargah* of Pir Jalaluddin Maqbul Shah.
92. On the anniversary of his death in the month of *Paus* every year a cattle fair is held as his love of animals was the local tradition.
93. Sultan Husain Shah (1493-1519) appointed Gopinath successively Finance Minister, *Naubaladhvaksa* (Superintendent of navy) and later *Wazir*. For his victory at a place called Purandar within the district of Birbhum, the Sultan conferred on him the title of 'Purandar Khan'. Devendra Chandra Basu Mullick, *Vamsa-Gaurab, Kayastha-tattva O Pataldanga Basu Mullick Vamser Itihas*, Cal. 1347 B.S., pp. 30-33, quoted in Bengal Past & Present, July-Dec., 1979 in *Raja Subodh Chandra Mallick & His times* by Amalendu De. Thus Gopinath was not only a good administrator and war-strategist but also a large-hearted Hindu *Zamindar*. He was not only a reformer of Hindu society but he approved of friendly relations between the Hindus and Muslims.

general. His achievements have been inmortalised in the *punthi* of Munshi Zainuddin and the story *Banabibir Zahuranama*. In the story he has been given the title of *Ghazi*. The *dargah* of Bara Khan Ghazi also exists. Before his image, clad in military dress, installed on an earthen altar, in village Dhabdhabi, the Muslims perform *namaz* every Friday. The Hindus also worship him chanting Ganesh hymns, for except this there is no other way of worship.[94] For the last 400 years a united holy *mela* (fair) of both the communities is being held in honour of the joint deity-*ghazi* of the Hindus and the Muslims. Lakshmikantapur has a grave and a small mosque named after Mani Bibi. Perhaps she was formerly a Hindu and built a temple, which was later converted to a mosque. The hermitage of Pir Thakurbar exists in Gobardanga.[95] Tradition has it that when Raja Mukut Ray was worsted by Barkhan Ghazi, the former's youngest son, Ramdev, came to Gobardanga for shelter and after conversion came to be known as Pir Thakurbar. The first word of the name is Muslim, the second is Hindu. After the Pir's death the *mutawalli* of the mosque and the grave used to worship him every evening with friuts, flowers and *bel* leaves and used to recite the *namaz* (prayer), in the attached mosque during noon. The '*Olā Bibir Sthan* (place) in Gobardanga is also a holy place (*Pithasthana*). As Olā Devi is goddess of the fatal cholera, the Muslims, out of fear, began to worship her as 'Olā Bibi'. The term Olā is a pure Hindu word.

As times the images of Hindu gods were found interred in the walls of mosques. In Maldah round the Adina mosque the broken or unbroken pieces of images of gods and goddesses were found scattered or interred or used as weights for balance. On the walls of chātmahar mosque in Pabna district were found attached

94. Every Tuesday or Saturday rheumatic patients used to assemble at the fair at Dhabdhabi and pray for medicines. People firmly believe that the mud of the *dargah*, applied to the afflicted part of the body, is an antedote to rheumatism.

95. That even after change of religion the Pir was known by his old Hindu name points to Hindu-Muslim synthesis in spite of the prevailing political bitterness and religious and social differences. In other words the contemporary orthodox Muslim society did not consider it objectionable for Muslim *Pirs* retaining Hindu names. The Muslims also adopted "Ola", the name of goddess of Cholera.

numerous images of Hindu gods. It was built in the second half of the 16th century by a Pathan *amir* or Qāqshāl family.

Again, at times both Hindus and Muslims were in the habit of offering fruits, flowers and *shirini* in mosques, e.g., to the two graves of Badr Saheb and Majlis Saheb besides the old ruins near the court house of Kalna, people irrespective of communities, offer fruits, flowers, *shirini* and toy horses etc. for worship. Bara Khan Ghazi, son of Jafar Khan, the conqueror of Saptagram, built a mosque, 10 miles distant from Jessore. In the Sunderbans area besides the Muslims the Hindus also often offer *shirini* in honour of the ghazi.[96]

(v) Muhurram:

The festival of Muhurram used to create deep emotion in the Muslim mind. This is known from *punthi* literature, *zāri* songs and pompous religious ceremonies. During the Muhurram the villages, predominated by the Muslims, in Bengal and Bihar, the *Tāzia* processions were conducted with special splendour, outward show and grief. The 18th-19th century Muslim reformers used to regard this as being influenced by idolatry and as anti-religious functions. They discovered here the influence of the immersion of Durga images and or Ratha Yatra. The mute play etc. performed in the *imambaras* had much similarity with the religious performances of the Hindus. Of the 1400 *tāzia* processions of Patna and Bihar Sharif area, 600 were conducted by the Hindus.[97]

96. These mosques and *dargahs* bear signs of destruction of Hindu temples and images. The majority of mosques of Pandua are the transformations of temples. The mosque of Baba Adam was built (1483) in village Qazi Qasba on the ruins of the finest temple of Rampal (in Dacca), the Pala capital. A few stones used in the *dargah* at Ghaysabad, 5 miles distant from Azimganj in Murshidabad district were probably brought from the Buddhist stupa at Mahasthangarh. Besides the graves of a few *faqirs* at Mangalkot, 5 miles distant from the subdivisional town of Katwa, there is an old mosque, whose foundation is octagonal like a Hindu temple. After the conquest of Saptagram on the Triveni, Jafar Khan built a huge mosque on the inner apartment (*garbha-griha*) of an ancient temple. His mortal remains are laid within it. For Badr Saheb, see Enamul Haq, Bange *Bange Sufi Prabhav*, 132-3.

97. James Wise, *Eastern Bengal*, 6, 9.

(vi) Survival of local customs and superstitions

The life of an ordinary Muslim like that of the Hindu from birth to death, was hedged with local customs and superstitions. The Indian Muslims, like the Hindus, used to believe in astrology. The importance of the *Najoomi* (*Najumi*) or the astrologer was growing in the society. People of all strata on every conceivable occasion, used to consult the *najumi*. Mir Qasim had his son's horoscope prepared by astrologers. It is after the verdict of the astrologers that marriage negotiations were finalised.[98]

Fear of evil spirits pervaded the mind of the Indian Muslims as described in Jaafar Sharif. Women were more susceptible to it than men, and like their Hindu sisters, often resorted to adoption of superstitious practices during pregnancy or child-birth, and even administered drink or drugs etc. with proved fatal to their husbands. Ignorant Muslims used the ashes of a dead Hindu for achieving certain desires. Similarly the moon was believed to possess a decisive influence on human affairs.[99]

The goddess Sitala or goddess of small-pox, was worshipped in the Punjab, Bihar, Bengal and other parts of India by the lower classes of Muslims. The goddess of cholera was worshipped alike by the Hindus (as Olā Devi) and by the Muslims (as Olā Bibi), as at Raktakhan within the jurisdiction of Jaynagar. Besides the fear of *Matri* or *Umm-i-Sibyan* (mother of children), a spirit which was believed both by Hindus and Muslims to cause convulsion to a child up to 18 months, performance of strange rites after the birth of a child in *chhatti ghar* or *asauchi ghar* or room of confinement, and certain ceremonies in connection

98. Irvine, *Army of the Indian Mughals*, 202; *Siyar*, i. 44; ii. 387; Jàafar Sharif, 84; Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali, *Observations on the Musalmans of India*, ed. by W. Crooke, i. 70.
The Mughal emperors before the beginning of the campaign used to take the advice of the astrologers as regards the auspicious day and auspicious moment of setting out. In the war of succession Farrukhsiyar took the advice of the astrologers.
99. Ja'afar Sharif, 2, 3, 6, 31, 52, 84, 338, 341-2; Mrs. Ali, i. 294-9; JASB. XIII (1852), 350.

with circumcision, menstruation and marriage, all indicated the influence of prevailing local customs on the Bengali Muslims. Burning or burial of widows on husbands' pyres or graves, female infanticide and intermarriage with Hindus took place in Rajaur in the time of Jahangir. Muslims as well as Hindus were found to worship in Manohar Nath Shrine in 1836.[100]

The simplicity of Muslim marriage ceremony came to be given up in favour of growing pomp and expensive displays, including music, dancing and drinking. The dowry system, denounced in Islam, invaded the Muslim society. The high amount of dower money agreed to by husbands was disapproved by the 14th century Saint of Bihar. Sipahsalar Usman demanded 40,000 *tankas* for his daughter. There were some difference between Hindu and Muslim systems. The birth of a daughter was regarded as a burden both by Hindus and Muslims. Many Muslims killed their daughters to save the expenses and trouble of rearing them. Widow remarriage, sanctioned by Islam, was frowned upon by the Indian Muslim, under Hindu influence. Mrs. Hasan Ali, on the basis of her twelve years' stay in India, writes that she did not hear of a widow marrying again' and that even many Muslim ladies led a single life after the death of the affianced grooms.[101]

(vii) Casteism in Islam

Islam teaches brotherhood and social equality. But the Indian Muslims came to imitate the caste distinctions of the Brahmans and the exclusiveness of the Rajputs. The earliest reference to social differentiations among the Muslims is found in *Insha-i-*

100. Wise, *Eastern Bengal*, 50ff.; E. & D. vi. 376; Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, ii. 238; *Cal. Review*, Vol. 33. No. 64 (1859), p. 254; JASB. i. 1832. 490; JRAS, Vol. 13 (1852), 350. For Ola Bibi see Amalendu De, *Itihas*, *op. cit.*; the *Bana Bibir Mela* is held in February at Kalikatala and *Sitalamatar Mela* in June at Taldi, *Dt. Handbook, 24-Parganas, op. cit.*
101. JASB. i. (1832), 492; *Qanun-i-Islam*, 133. 140, 195; Mrs. Ali, i. 46, 51, 350; Cal. Christian Observer, Nov. 1835 quoted in Anglo-India, ii. 65; JASB (1832), 493.

Mahru containing a proclamation in the time of Firuz Tughlaq (1353).

(*i*) The Sadat, Ulama, Mashaikh and similar others.
(*ii*) Khans, Maliks, Umara, Sadrs, Akabir, Maarif.
(*iii*) 'Train and suit' of no. (*ii*).
(*iv*) Zamindars, Muqaddams, Mufruzman (mafruzian?) madkan (Malkan) and such like.
(*v*) Hermits, saints and *gabrs* (probably fire-worshippers or any infidel).

True, such classification has no sanction in Islamic Law. But it shows that casteism came to have a "complete practical ascendancy" over the Muslims in certain areas and created subdivisions among Indian Muslims. The distinction between *Ashraf* (patricians) and *Ajlaf* (plebians) was due to Hindu influence. The Sayyids, Shaikhs, Mughals and Pathans formed the *Ashraf* (aristocratic) class. Though there was no bar to intermarriage and interdining, there were prohibitions to these in practice. Intermarriage was unusual, not only among the various divisions of the *Ashraf* but even within the same order. Thus there was no intermarriage among the four or five *qaums* of the Mughals of Purnea.

Besides social distinctions, there also grew up occupational caste distinctions, as among the Hindus. Each trade formed a separate caste. Buchanan found 38 low professional tribes in Bihar and Patna (e.g. weavers, tailors, lace-makers, etc.) but even these lower orders would not accept proferred intercourse with the higher ranks. Elsewhere in Bihar and Bengal, caste was deeply entrenched and numerous occupations were outside the pale of caste.[102]

102. *Insha-i-Mahru*, JASB (1923), 280; Cunningham, *Hist. of Sikhs*, 31; JASB, i (1832), 494; Mrs. Ali, i. 7-8; Martin, *Eastern India*, i. 49, 145-6; ii. 111-12; iii. 150-2, 515.

In the 17th century the French physician and traveller, Bernier observed : "The embroiderer brings up his son as an embroiderer, the son of a goldsmith becomes a goldsmith and a physician of the city educates his son for a physician. No one marries but in his own trade or profession and the custom is observed almost as rigidly by the Muhammadans as by the Hindus." (p. 258).

From the above few illustrations it becomes abundantly clear that if one wants to pursue the subject of Hindu-Muslim relations in medieval period, it is necessary to carry on research on the mosques, graves, *dargahs* and the history of the local traditions and anecdotes. It is from such scattered, piecemeal events that we get some preliminary idea of that deep-seated relationship, then slowly growing in the current of daily life of the masses, outside the crooked circle of politics, and above the complexities prescribed in the Holy Law. When this research is deep it would be possible to focus searchlight on Hindu-Muslim relations.

5

Evidence of Religion

It is not necessary to discuss separately the contemporary Brahmanical religion, based on the Vedas and the Upanishadas and non-Brahmanical religions and Islam for understanding the main theme of this essay, Hindu-Muslim relation. But religion and literature are very closely related and to understand the evidence of literature it becomes necessary to briefly refer to the religious situation.[103]

1. *Hinduism*: The faith in vedic sacrifices and oblations and ceremonies and rituals had slackened long ago. The Buddhist community, too, was almost on the verge of extinction, though some can trace the influence or last vestiges of Buddhism in the worship of Dharma Thakur by the people. The future of Jainism in Bengal was also almost gloomy. Among people of all classes and conditions from the highest to the lowest, Saiva-Sāktaism and Vaishnavism had become highly popular. The majority of venerable gods and goddesses had been established in popular mind even before the end of the fifteenth century.

103. Sukumar Sen, *Madhayuge* etc., 37-43; R.C. Majumdar, *Hist. Med. Bengal*, 195ff.

Tantricism had also become strong. Even among the Brahmans the mystical Tantric worship had become current.[104] In *smriti* works, too, the worship of gods and goddesses according to Tantric *sahaj* cult was acknowledged. Manasa Devi (Bishari, *Bisdharikā*) became the tutelary deity of the lower classes of the society.[105] Though the worship of Durga or Chandi was very old,[106] the worship of Durga[107] and Kali now became, under Tantric influence, the principal festival among the Brahmanas. It was according to the Tantric rites that the village gods and goddesses were worshipped,—viz., Bāsuli, Chandi, Kshetrapāl, Mangal Chandi, Banadurgā etc.[108]

The worship of Vishnu in stone-statue and image of Dasāvatāra was also old. The worship of image of Gopala was introduced during the second half of the 15th century by Madhavendra Puri and his disciples. Under the influence of Vaishnavism the Brindavan *Goswamis* introduced the adoration of the images of the divine pair, Rādhā and Krishna, from the first quarter of the 16th century. It was about this time that Narahari Sarkar of Srikhanda and Gauridas Pandit of Ambua Kalan initiated the worship of the images of Gaur-Nitai.[109]

Thanks to the influence of Vaishnavism of Sri Chaitanya,

104. Brindavandas has given an account of *tantrik-chakra*.
105. Brindavandas has referred to super-abundance of worship of Manasa in Bengal (Present W. Bengal) during 15th and 16th centuries. Bipradas Pipilai composed *Manasa Mangal* in the last decade of the 15th century. Govindananda in the Kavikankan Memorial Volume (1st quarter of 16th century) has mentioned this among the obligatory works to be performed during the year in South-west Bengal.
106. Halayudha has mentioned this in *Brahman-Sarbasva* among daily obligatory works in Vedic incantations.
107. *Basanti* (Spring) and *Saradiya* (Autumnal) worships are also very old. But *Saradiya* came to be the principal festival of the Bengalis before 14th century.
108. Banadurga, residing at Sākhot; Mangal Chandi of the Story of Dhanapati and others. Many engraved stone images (8th—9th centuries) of the goddess of story of Kalaketu, the Pauranic Chandi seated on an iguana have been found. Towards the end of 15th century songs of Chandi Mangal were specially current in present W. Bengal.
109. Advaita Acharya was its first initiator.

the emotion of *bhakti* was transmitted to Sakti-worship. Tantricism did not, of course, become extinct, but came to be transformed. The piety of the *upāsak* (devotee) to the *upāsya* (deity) now rested not on fear but on filial love.[110]

The importance of the old village *pithasthanas* (holy places) has always been acknowledged in Bengal. Without praising the village gods and goddesses, the singers of the *mangal pānchālis* (poetical works praising the glory of) Manasa and Chandi never started their performances. The poets of *Dharma-mangal*, too, have made obeisance to them, and in saluting the various directions in the poem, have introduced the holy places of the village.[111]

2. Transformation of Islam in Bengal—Characteristics of popular Islam.

The immense assimilative capacity of Hinduism failed to absorb the Muslim conquerors as it had done in the case of

110. Vsishnava manners came to be regarded as essential in Mallabhum. Later, in the 17th and 18th centuries it became ridiculously compulsory. Ruparam Chakravarty writes in his Dharmamangal that along with the general populace of the kingdom, the king also observes *ekadasi*. Even the fodder rations of elephants and horses were suspended. *Chārā mānā hāthike, ghorāke mānā ghās.* (prohibited is the sapling fodder for the elephant and grass for the horse).

111. e.g. Jagannath of Nilachal (Puri) ; Jajpur (? Konarak, one of the many *Pithas* or holy places of Dharma Thakur); "কাম্যাড়ার বন্দো ধর্ম বল্লুকার তীরে" in Burdwan ; Kaluray of Jādgrām (Jhāḍikhand); Jayachandi of Mangalkot; Jogādyā of Kshiragram; Basuli of Shehakhala (Sheakhala in Hooghly dt.); Dandeshwari of Laugram; Bisālakshi of Gotān; Nālu of Neoḍ; *Kānkrā-Bichhā* (crab-scorpion) Dharmaraj ; Kālanjar Ray of Patrasayar; Sashi Buri of Tālpur; Ghātu of Puḍas "পুড়াসের ঘাটু" Chandi of হিড়িমা (Hindima) ; Kal Ray and Dakshin Ray (of South Bengal).

the earlier invaders. But centuries of contact between the two communities had gradually led to the evolution of a popular religion in India, and especially in Bengal and Bihar, where the Muslim population was more numerous than in many other parts of India. Here, in these two regions, the population of Hindus and Muslims was also larger than many other areas. Here the social and religious life of the Muslims, came to be profoundly influenced by Hinduism and marked by interpenetration of certain beliefs, rites and ceremonies which were inconsistent with the Quran and bearing palpable signs of Hindu influence. If there was no absorption, there was undoubtedly assimilation between the two communities. So great was the extent of this assimilation that the *Hidayat ul Mominin*, a Sayyid Ahmadi treatise of the early nineteenth century, observes that in India, more than in any Muhammadan country, Islam and *Kufr* had been mixed up like *khichri*. In no other Muslim country was there any such parallel case.[112]

For this remarkable transformation in Indian Islam various factors were responsible. The utter simplicity of Islam with its monotheistic creed without idols and images, myths and mythology, was not easily appreciated by the neo-phytes, so long used to idolatry and ceremonies. The Muslims of Bengal lived in isolation from the cradle of Islam, while the conquerors lived in constant contact with alien races having individual cultures. The comparative numerical inferiority of the conquerors and the immigrants to Bengal amidst a hostile population made it necessary to win the local people either by conversion or pacification. This naturally implied some sort of compromise with the local beliefs and customs. Conversions of Hindus to Islam were sometimes incomplete; they were not attended with complete knowledge of and conformity to the doctrines of the new faith and complete breach with the past. As a matter of fact such convert Muslims remained wedded to their time-honoured beliefs, manners and customs and continued to

112. JASB. i (Nov. 1832), 489ff.; Hughes, *Notes on Muhammadanism*; *Dictionay of Islam*; R.C. Majumdar (ed.) *Delhi Sultanate*, ch. 16, 17; M.R. Tarafdar, *Husain Shah Bengal;* Yasin, *Social History*; Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements*; Aziz Ahmed, *Studies*.

practise them in their daily life and especially in villages. The Census Report of 1911 records the existence of communities which were "neither Hindus nor Muslims but a mixture of both." The ascetic Aulechand (d. 1769), the founder of the Kartabhaja sect, preached the Satya Dharma (True Religion) in the Nadia district of Bengal, and had as his disciples Muslims as well as Hindus. A *muqaddam* of Muslim village in Bengal told a missionary (c. 1850) that Prophet Muhammad was born in a Bengali Brahmin family. Intermarriage or concubinage with the Hindus implied "continuous amalgamation of the foreign with the indigenous elements in the Muhammadan population." The personal liberalism of some rulers also largely helped the two communities to come closer to each other. Garcin de Tassy speaks of this amalgam as a concession which Islam made arising from circumstances.[113]

Whatever might be the cause, Islam, as practised by the Muslims in Bengal about the mid-eighteenth century, had many popular elements, though it must be admitted that orthodox Islam was also practised in Bengal, in mosques, *madrassahs*, observance of fasts, and books were written on *hadis* or *fiqh*.[114]

(a) Saint Worship (Pirism)

Of all the examples of the united worship of Hindus and the Muslims in medieval India quoted by Pandit Kshitimohan Sen, the worship of the *Pir* (Saint) is one. It is a characteristic worthy of mention among the religious functions of the Indian Muslims and "the most important element of popular Islam in Bengal." In every town or village *Pir-worship* was current. The word *pir*, meaning 'old', denoted a 'mystic guide' (*cf. Shah, Shaikh*, or *Murshid* or *Ustad* or *sufi*), who initiates disciples (*murids*) in mystic orders. But while all *pirs* are sufis, all sufis are not *pirs*. This belief in saints and worship at their shrines

113. A. Karim, *Social History* ...... Ch. 15, 158-9, 162; Census Report (1911), I. Pt. 1. 118; *Ency, Islam*, ii. 491; K.K. Datta, *Survey* ...... 4; Wylia, *Bengal as a Field of Missions*, 318; M.A. Khan, *Faraizi Movement*, Chs. 1 & 2, Sec. B.

114. Data collected from Bengali literature,—*Chaitanya Bhagavat*, Bijay Gupta, *Padma Purana*; Mukundaram Kavikankan, 345-6; A. Karim, *Social History*, ch. 5, 158-75.

did not originate in India but were imported from Afghanistan, Persia and Iran by immigrants along with their religious orders. But in India certain factors facilitated the penetration of the concept of saint-worship into Muslim society. The long settlements of foreign Muslims side by side with the Hindus and converts enabled it to strike its roots deep in society. The worship of local gods and goddesses largely contributed to it. Garcin de Tassy held (1831) the saints (called in Hindustan, *Pir* or *Wali*) to be "substitutes for the Musulmans, in the place of the numerous gods of the Hindus. . . As amongst the saints, venerated by the Musulmans, there are some personages who professed the faith of the *vedas*, so several of the Musulman saints of India, are venerated by the Hindus". Thus the tombs of Shah Lohaumi at Monghyr and of Shah Arzani in West Patna were visited by Hindus and Muslims alike. Again, the pre-existing *Guru-chela* relationship found a kindred ideal in *Pir-muridi*. To the converts the *Pirs* resembled the Tantric *Gurus* and their tombs and *dargahs* (shrines) were parallelled by *chaityas* and the *stupas* of the Buddhists. The 'saints' of Islam established *dargahs* and *kanqahs* deliberately on Hindu or Buddhist sites. As Qanungo observes; 'This serves a double purpose of preventing the revival of these places of heathen sanctity, and later on of installing themselves as guardian deities with tales of pious fraud invented by popular imagination. Hindus who had been accustomed for centuries to venerate these places gradually forgot their past history, and easily transferred their allegiance to the *pirs* and *ghazis*. The result of this rapprochement in the domain of faith ultimately created a more tolerant atmosphere which kept the Hindus indifferent to their political destiny.[115] . . .

115. K.M. Sen, *Bhāratiya Madhyayuge Sādhanar Dhārā*.

As a result of Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis, worship of numerous *Pirs* originated in Bengal, e.g. Satyapir, Manikpir, Kalu Ghazi, Bara Khan Ghazi and others. They have been receiving worship from both communities.

Hindur devata haila Musalmaner pir,
Dui kule lai seba haia jahir.

(The *Pirs* of the Muslims became the gods of the Hindus. They manifested themselves and received worship from both sides).

The virtuous and the saints are always honoured. In olden times the Muslim commanders, killed in war, were worshipped as *ghazis* and *pirs*. Gradually the sanctity of the sites of the *pirs* also spread among the Hindu masses. There is mention of the old *pirs* and hermitages of the *pirs* of Bengal in the adoration of the various directions (*dig-vandanā*) in *Dharma-Mangal*, *Chandi-Mangal*, *Manasa-Mangal* and other poems.[116] In other words the Hindu popular literature have spaces earmarked in *Mangal-Kavyas* to Muslim *pirs* and places associated with them. Is it not an irrefutable sign of Hindu-Muslim *rapprochement*? The opinion of those historians who have drawn a picture of uninterrupted oppression and intolerance during this age, without examining the correctness of the exaggerated stories studded with the glories of Islam or without considering whether the legal decisions were actually implemented in practice, is at least partially erroneous. As a result of the infallible influence of Time the intensity of the clash and hostility of the initial age of the Muslim conquest gradually decreased. Had it not been so there would certainly have been no reference to such adorations in popular religious poems.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century the adoration of Sitaram Das deserves to be quoted, viz.

Kavyamalancha, 30, ed. by Abdul Qadir & Rezaul Karim (1945). See Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya, 36, 142.

Ency. Religion & Ethics, X. 40; A. Karim, *Social History* ..... 162-170, 201, 88, 90. 134ff.; M. Garcin de Tassy, *Musalman Saints of India* in Asiatic Journal (1831), IV 75-6; VI (Aug. 1831), 222; M.A. Khan, *Faraizi Movement*, Ch. 1, Sec. B., K.R. Qanungo in Sarkar (ed.) *Hist.* Bengal ii. 69-70; Dr. Qanungo's observation in this context deserves special notice.

Shah Arzani was a Pushto saint and his *diwan* in Pushto has come down to us. He was a contemporary of Jahangir and Shahjahan and his *dargah* was built on old Hindu and Buddhist sites.

116. Sukumar Sen, *Madhyayuge* ...... 41-3.

বন্দো পীর ইসমালি গড় মান্দারনে ।
বাঘ মহিষ কাননে বাস পালে পাল,
মান্দারন গৌড়েতে যাহার জাঙ্গাল ।
গড় মাঝে বসাল্য আগার গণ্ডা কোট,
তাহার চরণ বন্দো ভূমে হয়্যা লোট ।
দারাবেগ ফকীর বন্দিব নিগাহে,
জোড়হাতে বন্দিব পাঁড়ুয়ার সুফী খাস্তে ।
বড় পঁতরায় বন্দ পীর কুতুব আলম,
তাঁহার দরগা দিয়া নাহি চলে যম ।
বাইপুরের গোরাচাঁদ নানপুরে নাল,
বন্দিব সাহেব-দুল্লা শিরে বান্ধ্যা শাল ।
সংহতি বখ্যানি বন্দো ভালকির পীর,
বদর আলম বন্দো সাগরে জাহির ।
ত্রিপিনির পীর বন্দো দফর খাঁ গাজি,
হিজলীর হিংগা বন্দো দিল হয়্যা রাজি ।
কোট শিমূলের পীর বন্দো হয়্যা সাবধান,
নদীর গায়ে বসিয়া দুনিয়া পানে চান ।
বন্দিব .... করি কৃতাঞ্জলি,
হিজলীর বন্দিব তজখাঁ মছন্দালি ।
পেকাম্বর মোকাম করিল যার হেটে,
ফর্জন্দ পয়দা হৈল কেউটালের পেটে ।
নাম তার তাজখাঁ থুইল পেকাম্বর,
অধিকার দিল তারে দরিয়া উফর ।
জমি হেতু দরিয়াকে হুকুম করিল,
দশ যোজন দরিয়া হুকুমে পাছু হৈল ।
পাতশাহি সুত্রেরে দিয়া গেল পেকাম্বর,
বিরাম শঙ্করা বন্দো বর্দ্ধমান ভিতর ।
পেকাম্বর মদার আউল্যা, শাহজির,
গতিমান হইয়া বন্দিব সত্যপীর ।[117]

117. Sitaramdas quoted in Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. 2.

The masses of the people believed that the Sufis and the *pirs* possessed supernatural powers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century this faith assumed vast proportions among the Indian Muslims. They solicited the aid and favours of the *pirs* and sought to avoid danger with the talismans and amulets given by them. Both the communities, Hindu and Muslim, used to regard tigers and *cheetahs* as symbols of the *pirs*. The Muslim devotees of the Sunderbans claimed that they possessed the knowledge of the magical formula to avoid the wrath of the tiger. In the hope of gaining their graces the masses of the Hindus and the Muslims used to keep them pleased with offerings of food articles *cowries* (shells used as money).[118] There is nothing to wonder that human beings, believing in supernatural power, would present oblations and reverential offerings to the *pir* or in honour of spirit of a dead *pir*. The Muslim populace were more zealous for the worship of saints and *pirs* than in the obligatory religious functions, as a result of which the *dargahs* of the *pirs* were gradually transformed into places of pilgrimage. On many occasions the administrators had these *dargahs* constructed and

Pir Ismāli or Ismail. Another reading, 'Pirismāli Sangria' (i.e. remembering). By recollecting his name one can fearlessly move on the road ('*pathe chalā jāi*')/*maiṣe nāhi māre tāre bāghi nāhi khāi* (no buffalo kills him not does a tiger eat him) *Pānrhuā* is Pāndua. 'Sufi Khāyen' is perhaps Subhi Khān. 'Bara Pontrai is Bara Pndua. Qutb 'Alam is Nur Qutb 'Alam, Contemporary of Rajah Ganesh. '*Badr 'Alam*, is Pir Badr. *Tripini* is Tribeni. 'Birām Shakkara' is Bahram Saqqa. 'Pekambar' is Paighambar.

118. The ordinary people firmly believed that the *pirs* possessed supernatural power. He could cure diseases; assuage the sorrow and pain of the poor and the indigent and the sick: dispel barrenness of sterile women; be present at different places at the same time; make prophecies; even bring a dead man to life or cause the death of a man; and cause heavy rain to fall at one place. There is a tradition that Shah Karim Ali of Jagannathpur in Tripura performed such feats. Asiatic Journal VI (1831), 354-5; JASB, Vol. 43 (1874), Pt. 1, No. 1, 96; Vol. 63 (1894), Pt. 3 No. 1. 38. There is a *dargah* of the renowned Pir Machhandali Saif (? Sharif) near Gangasagar. He floated a boat that had ran aground. For disbelieving his statement to this effect he caused a barber to die, as tradition goes. West Bengal Dt. Handbook. 24-Parganas, xliv : Titus, 131; A.R. Mullick, *British Policy and Muslims in Bengal* (1757-1858), 10-11, Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, ii. 608.

arranged for their supervision.[119] The Hindus and Muslims, irrespective of religion, used to show deep veneration to the *dargahs* wherein the bodily remains of the saints were preserved (e.g. the *dargah* of Abdul Qadir in Mansurganj, Gorakhpur). Oftentimes the graveyards of the saints attracted greater crowds than mosques.[120] The local aristocracy used to regard the arrangements for supervision of the *dargahs* to be a noble act. The devout used to flock to the *dargahs* in processions, imitating Hindu practice, by fastening banners as symbols to rods or lances of various sizes, offered prayers and bestowed oblations, People of different categories frequented the *melas* (fairs) held in the *dargahs* as in the Hindu places of pilgrimage. Besides the really devoted people, singers, instrumental musicians, magicians dancing girls, the unemployed, the bad-charactered, the cunning and the cheats used to throng here. The same psychology that actuated the Hindus to go to Puri and Brindaban also led the Muslim pilgrims to frequent the holy *dargahs* i.e., besides participating in religious ceremonies, with a desire to satisfy some wish, or downright passion for worldly pleasure, like getting a son, being restored to health, fortune-seeking or craze for high posts.[121] A resemblance is noticeable between the veneration of a Muslim devotee to the living *pir* andth e demonstration of piety of Hindu disciple to the *Guru* or *Gosain*. The *sijda* of the *murid*

119. See f.n. 115.

120. There were a few special ways to offer devotional offerings. After a good harvest offering of boiled rice was made as a token of gratitude; or paddy or sugar-cake was offered to avoid a bad time or a great pestilence.

James Wise. The Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal in JASB Vol. 63 (1894), Pt. 3, No. 1. 37; Blochmann, JASB. Vol, 42 (1873), Pt. 1, No. 3. 236-302; Pt. iii. No. 1. 280-1; Vol. 43 (1874), Pt. 1, No. 1, 89, 96; Buchanan in Martin, *Eastern India*, ii. 635, 638, 640, 644-46, 660, 666, 667, 669, 352 (Gorakhpur); iii. 423, 447. Names of Saints given. See my *Islam in Bengal*, 32-33.

The Mausoleum of Badruddin Badr i Alam (or Pir Badar of Chittagong), famous as Chhota Dargah is located in Bihar Sharif in Patna dt.

121. For the *dargahs* of Shah Makhdum and Shah Qutb in Malda dt. (now in Rajshahi), 28,000 bighas rent-free land was granted. For the supervision of the mausoleums of Mulla Atauddin of Dinajpur and Abdul Qadir of Mansurganj 200 and 100 bighas rent-free land were respectively ear-marked.

before the *pir* can be compared with the prostration on the ground of the Hindu disciple before the *Guru*. The orthodox Muslims used to consider it to be a highly reprehensible conduct.[122]

(b) Foot-prints:

Mosques containing the foot-prints of the Prophet (*Qadam Rasul*) as on the bank of the Lakhya, east of Dacca, may be compared to the Vishnupada temple of Gaya and *Dharma Paduka* in Burdwan district and the *Mutawalli* to the *Gayawal* Brahman. The *Qadam Rasul* building of Gaud still exists to-day. The *dargah* of Shah Langar at Muazzampur containing his foot-prints attracted crowds of pilgrims. Monuments were erected over the relics of Ismail Ghazi at Pirganj in North Bengal.[123]

(c) Mystic Cults:

Various local cults grew up in Bengal with traditions and legends round some *pirs* and mythical personages of uncertain identity which became very popular both among the Muslims and Hindus.

(*i*) Khwajah Khizr was believed to have 'discovered the source of the water of life,' being an expert in prediction and the protector of mariners from shipwreck. His festival (*Khawaj, Bera* or *Bhera*) was observed in Bhadra (Aug-Sept.) by Muslim and Hindu boatmen and fishermen, floating lights on the water. Siraj ud daulah celebrated this festival. A few years later William Hodges witnessed it near Murshidabad on the Bhagirathi (1780-83). In 1821 the Nawab of Murshidabad also observed the festival.[124]

Martin, *Eastern India*, ii. 645, 352, 660; iii. 59; Asiatic Journal, Vol. 6 (1831), 355-6; JASB. i (1832); 489-93; Vol. 63 (1894), Pt. 3, No. 1. 37.

122. See f.n. 118.

123. J. Wise in JASB Vol. 63 (1894), Pt. 3, No. 1, p. 236; Blochmann in JASB. Vol. 42 (1873), Pt. 1, No. 3. 238; Martin, *Eastern India*, iii. 458; Siyar, ii. 359; Karim, Social History, 173-5.

124. *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 7 (1832), 142; JASB. Vol. 63 (1894) Pt. 3, No. 1. 38-39; Ja'afar Sharif, 272-3; J. Wise, Eastern Bengal, 12-20; Hodges, *Travels*, 35, *Siyar* (Briggs), ii. 533. Brajendra N. Bandopadhyaya, *Sangbadpatre Sekaler Katha*, Pt. 1. p. 272.

(*ii*) The story of another distinct water-god named Pir Badr was also current. His name was invoked by every sailor or fisherman before journey or during storm in Bengal. He became their patron saint. His *dargah* in centre of Chittagong where he performed the *chilla*, was frequented by pilgrims on 29th Ramzan. He lies buried in Choti Dargah in Bihar Sharif. He has been variously identified with Badruddin Badr-i-Alam of Chittagong or with a Portuguese, Pas Goal Pearis Botheilo or regarded as coming of Chittagong about the beginning of 18th century floating on a rock.[125]

(*iii*) The legends centring round Zindah Ghazi, Ghazi Miyan (Salar Masud of Bahraich) and Sat Pir are similar and identification is difficult. The forests and rivers of Sundarbans being infested with tigers and crocodiles, the wood cutters, Hindu or Muslim, worshipped mythical heroes for protection from tigers and crocodiles,—Muhurra (Mabra i.e. Mubarak) Ghazi in the 24 Parganas; Zindah Ghazi on the banks of the Lakhya river in the eastern part of the Delta; Kalu Rai and Dakshin Rai (riding on a tiger) of the Hindus. Before entering the forest or sailing on the water one must offer worship to the shrines, little earthen mounds raised by Hindus and Muslims. Two mounds on the banks of the Lakhya river in Eastern Bengal represented the Ghazi and his brother Kalu. The manner and the articles of worship among the Hindus and the Muslims were similar.[126]

125. JASB. Vol. 63 (1894), 41; Vol. 42 (1873), Pt. 1, No. 3, p. 802; J.D. Anderson, *People of India*, 85.

Pir Badr is often identified with a Portuguese, Pas Goal Pearis Botheilo. The story goes that in the beginning of the 18th century he arrived at Chittagong, riding on a floating rock ! This is a very doubtful identification.

126. *Statistical and Geographical Survey of 24-Parganahs District*, R. Smyth in JASB. Vol. 63 (1894), Pt. 3, No. 1, pp. 40, 43; *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 4 (1831), 75-6.

For Salar Masud, see Elliot on *Mirat i Masudi*. Haji Ilyas visited his mausoleum.

The *dargah* of Muhurra Ghazi (Mabra or Pir Ghazi Mubarak Ali Saheb) is situated at Ghutiari Sharif on Sealdah-Canning section, Eastern Railway. See *Census 1951 West Bengal Dt. Handbook*, 24 Parganahs, XLIV-V, 359.

(*iv*) The followers of Shaikh Madār (Sayyid Badiuddin Madar), the saint of Makwanpur, were known as Madaris. In Bengal the festival of Madar Jhanda was celebrated by the lower classes of Muslims and Hindus alike. In Purnea and Rangpur areas Buchanan found numerous families of Madari *faqirs*. Many Madaris dressed or were naked like Hindu *sannyasis* and passed through fire like the Hindus.[127]

(*v*) The worship of *Panch Pir* or Five Pirs, invoked to avert danger, was very popular among the Hindus and Indian Muslims, especially in Bengal and Bihar. Before sailing Muslim boatmen would utter the names of Allah, Nabi, *Panch Pir*, Badr etc. The identity of the five *Pirs* is uncertain, varying in different parts of India. In Bengal we hear of Manik Pir, (? Badr Pir), Ghora Pir, Kumbhira Pir, Madari Pir, but there is no special ceremony or festival. James Wise found a Panch Pir shrine of five unfinished tombs in Sonargaon worshipped by Hindus and Muslims alike. It has been regarded as an example of fusion of Islam and animism, i.e., 'of Muslim hagiology grafted on animism'. The followers of this sect were called *Panch Piriyas*. This cult may be traced to the five Pandavas of the Mahabharata or five Dhyani Buddhas. In some West Bengal districts (Midnapur, Burdwan) the *Panch Pir* is worshipped even to-day.[128]

The mausoleum of Pir Gorachand or Gorai Ghazi is situated at Haroa in Basirhat Subdivision, ibid., ciii. Songs are sung in honour of the Ghazi also at Raktakhan in Jaynagar. The late Kalidas Dutt, Zamindar of Majilpur discovered a *punthi* of the songs with Sri Purna Chandra Gayen at Nimpith, see article by Amalendu De, *Itihas*, New Series, B.S. 1375, Vol. 4, pt. 3.

127. Asiatic Journal, *op. cit.*, Vol. 7 (1832), 56-7; Ja'afar Sharif, 241; Mrs. Ali, ii. 321; Martin, Eastern India, ii. 110; iii. 147-8, 515.

Numerous stories are current about Sheikh Madar. According to Wilson, the sect originated in Persia and it was preached in India by a Sufi known as Badiuddin. It is a mistake to hold him as the progenitor of this religious doctrine. Some hold that the Prophet, before reaching Paradise uttered the word 'Dam Madar'.

128. JASB. Vol. 63 (1894), Pt. 3, No. 1. 43-44; 1854, p. 159; Imp. Gaz. i. 433-6; Karim, *Social History*, 167-9; *Ency. Rel. & Ethics*, ix. 600.

The mystics of Bengal in the 19th century were of two kinds judged by conformity or otherwise to the *Shariah*. The first type whose practices conformed to it (*bashara*, also *salik*) was more respected than the second (*beshara*, also *majzub*) whose practices did not.[129]

(d) Muslim ascetics:

Many among the Indian Muslims had adopted the practices of Hindu ascetics, with numerous and bewildering groups of *faqirs*. By the 19th century there were four major orders of such *faqirs*,—*Arjunshahi*, *Jalali*, *Madari* and *Benawaz* with numerous divisions and sub-divisions. Jaafar Sharif refers to a class of *Sahajiya faqirs*, who dressed like women and sang and danced before their *murshid*. The conduct of most *faqirs* was against the injunctions of Islam.[130]

(e) Mullaism:

It has been mentioned before that there is no place for priesthood in Islam. Still contemporary Bengali literature contains references to the growth of Mullaism or Muslim priestly influence. Being fairly well-versed in religious principles and daily practices of Islam, the Mullah was consulted by villagers in Muslim society and paid for their services. An inscription of the time of Nusrat Shah testifies to their importance as a group in society, holding charge of a mosque.[131] This influence of *Mullah* is comparable to that of the Brahman *pandit* (*Purohit*).

(f) Popular cults, religious rites and ceremonies:

As a result of long contact between the two communities, the lower classes of both Hindus and Muslims came to have common objects of worship. Members of one community appealed to the gods and saints of the other, failing their own,

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129. J. Wise *E. Bengal*, 35.
130. Martin, *Eastern India* 108-110; Ja'afar Sharif, 291-3, 296.
131. Mukundaram, *Kavikankan Chandi* (c. end of 16th century), 343-4; *Padma Purana* ed. Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya, p. 54.

during illness or distress. Buchanan found such mutual worship among the Brahmans, *Mullah* and *faqirs* and suspected that some *qazis* and *pandits* used to do so in Rangpur, while in Gorakhpur even Muslims of foreign origin and of high rank were influenced by Hindu practices through their womenfollk. In Bengal similar was the growth of the cults of Satya Pir (True Saint) and Satya Narayan (True God) among the Muslims and the Hindus respectively without the use of any image; the god being 'very good natured" and ever ready to "concede trifles". Excavations at Satya Bhita, the site of Buddhist monastery of Paharpur, revealed Muslim relics.[132]

It is thus seen that in Bengal the ways of living of the Muslims were largely influenced by Hindu customs and ceremonies.

(g) Sufism and its contribution :

The contribution of the Sufis in the field of cultural syncretism deserves mention. Sufism came from Central and West Asia and penetrated to the towns and villages of this country. Its basic message is that the seeker after God is a *Sālik* (traveller). The Sufis impart to him complete knowledge about God and guide him to achieve *fanā* (annihilation) in union with Him in one way (*tariqāh*) through different stages (*makāmat*) and diverse conditions (*āhwāl*). Its very next step is eternity (*baqā*). A few Sufis fought with local rulers for augmenting the power of the Muslims or influenced the policy of the Sultans and were connected with political events. For this reason some historians consider them to be enemies of the Hindus. Many Sufi saints used to impart religious instruction. In fact learning religion, too, was a principal ingredient of education. Maulana Taqiuddin and Maulana Sarfuddin Abu Tauma (13th century) used to teach the common people in the *khanqas*. A Yogi named Bhojar Brahman attained proficiency in Islamic science after studying under the superintendence of Qazi Ruknuddin Muhammad Samarqandi. According to the historian Stuart the famous

132. Martin, *op. cit.* ii. 145. 445-6; iii. 512; D.C. Sen, 796-7.

saint Nur Qutb 'Alam established a *madrassa* or college and a hospital. But this is open to doubt.

The incomparable character, guilelessness, endurance of toil, and unostentatious lives of numerous Sufis charmed and attracted the people. The general populace believed that they possessed super natural power. (see p. 70.n)

Besides these Sufi saints also used to perform works of public welfare. They used to help the poor, sick and helpless persons. Their monasteries and hospices (*khanqas*) and almshouses (*mihmānkhana*) were always open to the destitute and the friendless, the mendicants and travellers for providing shelter and distributing food. During their life-time they had earned the respects of the people by such acts of public benefit. After their death too, their *dargahs* equally attracted the devotion of the general populaces and were regarded as places of pilgrimage.

The *Sekh-Subhodayā*, the life of Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrezi, reputed to be the composition of Halāyudh Mishra, the minister of Raja Lakshmansena was written in the 16th century From this we learn that many men became followers of the Shaikh. It is said that when he cured a dying man, he, along with his wife, Madhavi, accepted servitude under him. Four officers (*adhikāri*) grew jealous of the Shaikh and, in order to test him, feigned blindness and went to him for treatment. When they actually became blind, they begged his mercy and regaining their eyesight, embraced Islam with their entire families. As the Shaikh's influence grew in this way, Raja Lakshmanasena was also influenced by him.

The Muslim saints gained renown among the people for another reason as well. Most of the *dargahs* were erected on the sites of old holy building. The *dargah* of Sayyid Sultan *Māhisuwar* (lit. riding on fish) at Mahāsthāngarh in the Bogura district was built on a Siva temple. The *bhita* (dwelling) of *Satyapir* was constructed on the Buddhist monastery at Pāhārpur in Rajshahi district. It is stated in the *Sekh Subhodayā* that the local *sādhus* (saints), the majority of whom were Tāntric *Gurus*, were converted into Islam after being defeated in debate with the Muslim saints. The *dargahs* of the victorious saints were erected on the hermitages located on the *tilas* (mounds or

hillocks) of those worsted. These *Gurus* exercised a mysterious hold and mastery over the over-credulous populace. The villagers used to flock to them in the hope of gaining salvation, remedying their sorrow and suffering and getting consolation. Even after their conversion their places of shelter, though occupied by the Muslim saints, continued to remain as places of pilgrimages. The people were converted only in name; they had little knowledge of Islam. But their old language continued to flourish and the local manners and customs and faith as well as the stream of life continued to run as of old. Thus the local fundamental threads commingled with Islam in Bengal.

6

Evidence of Literature

1. The Pursuit of knowledge by the Hindus during Turko-Afghan period.

Some believe that Bengali intellect dried up and become stupefied during the Turko-Afghan age. But this is only partially true. It is of course undeniable that in the prevailing political uncertainty the Bengali mind, shattered by Muslim outrage, was at first stunned and overwhelmed, and the mental peace, appropriate for cultivation of knowledge, was also disturbed. For, first comes life and then comes knowledge. To save himself from the momentum of the Turki invasion the king had to be a fugitive. The Brahmans, too, now devoid of protection and lacking a patron, in search of security fled to distant lands like Gauda, Orissa, Varanasi, Tibet, Nepal, etc. The Buddhists, afraid of losing their lives, not only abandoned the country but even gave up their religion and dress and took shelter in Hindu society.

In Bengal it was the Sanskrit language, nourished by royal favour that was the vehicle of society and culture. But now the former king was a refugee and so incapable of bestowing

any favour on it. To the reigning sultan it was incomprehensible, unknown and the language of the infidel's gods (i.e. Sanskrit), and hence fit to be forsaken. For a century after the conquest of Bengal up to about A.D. 1300 no literature worth mention was composed except *Manasār Bhāsān* by Kānā Haridās.[133] Its standard was not high. Gradually the Bengalis began to grow conscious. A new impulse became articulate in Bengal in the fourteenth century after the establishment of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty. Poet Vidyapati (c. 1360-1480) was a Maithil but his *Padāvali* ('wreath of stanzas') occupy a distinguished place among the *Vaishnava Padavali* of Bengal.[133a] Udayanacharya Bhaduri wrote *Kiranāvali, Ātmatattva, Vivek, Kanād-Sutra-tikā* and *Manusamhitātikā*. Narayan Deva composed *Padmapurāna*. In the fifteenth century two brothers Sukreshwar and Vaneshwar (1407-93) wrote the history of Tripura (Rājamālā). Chandidas (1417-77) indicated to the Bengalis the path to the spring of uncommon literary flavour (*rasa*) in his charming *padavali* and *Sri Krishnakirtan*. His contemporary poet Krittivas (1460-90) gave Valmiki's *Ramayana* a new orientation to suit the mentality of the Bengalis. In the events of the Ayodhya family we see a reflected image of the family life of a Bengali householder. He also wrote a few other works like *Sri Ramer Yuddha, Yogadyar Vandana* and *Rukangad Rajar Ekadasi*. In this century Sekhar Ray's (1449-1508) *Padavali*, Maladhar Basu's (d 1493) *Sri Krishna Vijaya* and *Lakshmi Charitra* and Raghunath Siromani's (c. end of 15th century) *Lilavati tika* and *Brahmasutravritti* are also worthy of mention.

In the 16th century the blossoming of Vaishnavism of Sri Chaitanya was a most momentous event in Bengal and in the national life of the Bengalis. A new orientation of Bengali literature took place on account of the influence of Chaitanyadeva's biography, *Vaishnavapadavali* and *Kadcha* literature. Of the numerous contemporary Bengali intellectuals only a few names are mentioned as illustrations, from which it will be clear

133. His name is Haridas Dutt. Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I. Purbardha, 248.

133*a*. R.K. Chaudhary, Mithila in the Age of Vidyapati, A Survey of Maithili Literature.

that gradually the Bengali intellect was able to eliminate the obstacles and dangers of the first era of the Muslim rule, viz. (i) Pandit Basudev Sārvabhauma, teacher of Chaitanya and logician; (ii) Yavana Haridas (1450-1530); (iii) Advaita (1460-1558), companion of Chaitanya : (iv) Swarup Damodar (1465-1540), composer of *kadcha* : (v) Nityananda (1477-1580), disciple of Chaitanya and author of *Sitala-Mangal* and *Adbhut Ramayan* ; (vi and vii), Sanatan (b. 1482) and Rup (b. 1484), disciples of Sri Chaitanya ; (viii) Narahari Sarkar (1495-1580), author of *Bhakta-Amritastak* and *Bhaktichandrikāpatala* ; (ix) Raghunath Das (1495-1585), author of *Sri Chaitanya Sabda Kalpabriksa, Gunalesa-Sekhar* and *Mahasiksha*; (x) Smārta Raghunandan (1500-1580), author of *Navya-Smriti*; (xi) Gopala Bhatta (1500-1565) author of *Haribhaktivilāsa, Vrindāban Krishna Karpuramrita*; (xii) Paramānand Sen, Kavikaranpur (1518-77) author of drama *Chaitanya Chandrodaya* and *Chaitanya Charanāmrita*; (xiii) Jiva Goswami (1518-1610), author of *Sata Sandarva, Krama-Sandarua, Madhava Mahotsava*.

Besides these many biographies (*Charanāmrita*) and *Kadchas* were composed, which enriched Bengali literature. Among these the following are worthy of mention : *Chaitanya Bhāgbvat* of Brindāvandas, *Chaitanya Mangal* of Jayānanda, *Chaitayna-Mangal* of Lochandās, *Chaitanyacharitāmrita* of Krishnadās Kaviraj (1517-1616) and *Sri Krishna Chaitanya Charitamrita* (Wr. 1533 in Sanskrit).[134]

The fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the birth of *bratagita* pānchāli, (small poetical works with religious vows sung in honour of some deity). In connection with the narration of the greatness of the village gods and goddesses, based on a fusion of chronicle and fairy tale, these narrative poems fit to be sung were first composed on three deities. In

134. See Biman Bihari Majumdar, *Chaitanya chariter Upadan*.
Besides these names there are others—*Bhaktiratnakar* of Narahari Das; *Premavilas* of Nityananda Das; *Krishnapremtarangini* of Raghunath Pandit (1514); *Sangit Madhav Padavali* and *Karnamrita Kavya* of Govindadas Kaviraj (1530-1600), *Padavali* of Gyanadas (1502-1600). According to Sukumar Sen the *Kadcha* of *Karmakar* Govindadas is not genuine. *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, Purbardha, 374-6.

chronological order these were *Manasā Mangal, Chandi Mangal* and *Dharma Mangal.*[135] Subsequently their scope widened.

A. Manasa-Mangal—There were various poets of different ages who wrote about *Manasā-Mangal* or *Manasā-Prasasti* (i. e. eulogy). According to Dr. Sukumar Sen, Vipradas, an inhabitant of Birbhum, was the oldest, about the last decade of the 15th century,[136] and the *Manasā Mangal* of Vijaya Gupta of Phullasri village in the district of Barisal was written in the 18th century.[137]

B. Chandi-Mangal : In the 16th century a few poems were written in the background of the story of the hunter Kālaketu and the Merchant, based on the greatness and eulogy of the goddess Chandi. The real name of the *Pānchāli* poem was *Abhayā-Mangal*, for though the Goddess Durga, inhabiting the Vindhyas, was not merely the trampler of *Mahisāsur* but also *Abhayā*, who gives assurance of safety. According to the evidence of the *Brahmansarvasya* of Halāyudha (of the time of Lakshmansena) and of Brindāvandās (towards the end of 15th century), the worship of Durgā-Chandi in accordance with the injunctions of *Smriti had* gained currency among educated Brahmanas long before the Muslim conquest of Bengal.[138]

135. Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, Vol. I., Chs. 9, 15.
136. Names of a few authors of *Manasa-mangal* before and after Vipradas are available, e.g. Harihar Dutta of Eastern Bengal (14th century); Narayan of Mymensingh dt. and Padmapuran of Narayandas of Tripura dt. (born at Mohanshol) both of 15th century. Sushila Mandal, Appendix 53. It seems Sukumar Sen has not placed any credence on these. He has also not referred to Dwija Bansidhar of 15th century and Ketakacharya Kshemananda of 16th century.
137. Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, 241-4. He has ignored the date, *Ritusunya-vedashashi*, or 1406 Saka/1484 as an interpolation.
138. *Op. cit.*, Ch. 15.
That the first poet of this poetry was Manikdatta, as is traditionally believed, has been admitted in the old *punthi* (ms.) of Mukundaram. He was born in Gauda in 14th century but what passes as his *panchali* is considered by Sukumar Sen to belong to the 18th century. (Vol. I. 496-507).
The available *punthi* (ms.) of *Chandi-Mangal* by Dwija Madhav (or Madhavanand), is according to Dr. S. Sen, a 'haphazard composition'. His residence, father's identity and time of composition are full of uncertainties (pp. 508-13). Was his residence at Chittagong ?, Nabadwip ? or Saptagram ? Who is Parasar ? Was it written in the 16th or 17th century ? Sushila Mandal, Appendix, p. 54.

The best among all Chandi-Mangal *pānchālis* is the poem of *Kavikankan* Mukundaram Chakravarty (written about the last quarter of the 16th century). His ancestral abode was Daminyā or Damunyā or Damuniyā village in Burdwan. Accordingly to Dr. Sukumar Sen, "It is doubtful if such a complete picture of Bengal and the Bengali people is available elsewhere in Bengali literature. His proficiency in Sanskrit literature and rhetoric, his knowledge and experience of customs and usages. (*desi vidya* or *lok vyavahar*) and other matters are really surprising".[139]

Besides these, *Mangal Kāvyas* (Eulogistic Poems) about gods and goddesses also have been composed, e. g., *Siva-Mangal* or *Sivāyan, Kāli (Kālika) - Mangal, Sitalā-Mangal, Gangā-Mangal* etc.[140]

C. Dharma-Kathā, Dharmā-Mangal :

During the medieval period the worship of Dharmaraj ('Raya') or Dharma Thakur sprang up as a result of the blending of the practices of Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, in fact of all religions.[141] In the ordinances of the worship of Dharma there is

139. Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, 514-48.
In consonance with the reference to Man Singh's Orissa Campaign in that work (pp. 522-3) the approximate date would be 1589-90.
140. R.C. Majumdar, *Hist. Medieval Bengal.*
141. By origin Dharma was a manifestation of Vedic Baruna, though other Vedic deities have also been merged in him. According to Haraprasad Sastri the worship of Dharma was the last development of Buddhism in Bengal, though many do not accept this view. Sukumar Sen, Vol. 2, Ch. 7, 126-7.
During the medieval period *Dharma-puja* was limited to *Radha* country and frontier areas of Bengal but at one time, in the 14th century it was current not only in the whole of Bengal but also outside, e.g. as in Bihar (*Chhat* festival), Kashi, Kosala and Northern India. Jajpur in Orissa was one of its *pithasthans* (holy places). S. Sen, *op. cit.*, 132.

mention of Vedic sacrificial ceremonies, '*Kalima Jālāl*, small Jalali, *Bāramati* (*dwār-mukti*, opening the door), *Dadurighāta*, *Gharbhāngā* (dissolution of the house, the performance on the last day), and other festivals. There are three parts of *Dharmakathā* (story of Dharma) viz., (i) *Samjāt* ceremony, or the procedure of performing the worship : (ii) *Dharmapurāna* or ritualistic *shastric* injunctions : (iii) Dharma-*Mangal* or stories of the greatness of Dharma. And the general Introduction contains an account of creation, that is called *Sunya Purāna* or *Sunya Sāstra*.

All the treatises of the first part are attributed to the name of the originator and the first priest of the deity, Rāmāi (Srijut Ramaini, Pandit Sri Ram and so on. According to Dr. Sukumar Sen, the memory of Firuz Tughlaq's lightning expendition to Orissa and Bengal is involved in the *Jālāli Kalimā* or Great *Jālāli*. The populace, harassed by the oppression of the Vedic Brahmans in Jājpur appealed to Dharma Thakur.[142] This portion is called *Niranjaner Rushma* or wrath of Niranjan Dharma Thakur. Here Niranjan descended to the earth in the form of *Khoda* as the saviour of the *Sat-dharmis* or worshippers of *Dharma* against the Brahmans. The other gods and goddesses followed him. Temples was distroyed. The *Sat-dharmis* were saved. (This has been referred to in chapter 2). Dr. Shahidullah writes in the introduction to *Sunya-Purāna* (p. 35) that the Brahmans treated the Buddhist worshippers of *Dharma* and the Muslims uniformly. So Dharma Thakura represented the joint remonstrance of the Buddhists and the Muslims against the Brahmans.

After the 'Great Jālāli' comes the 'Lesser Jālāli.' Khondkar proceeded to sit in judgement over the 'Hindu and Muslim bre-

142. According to Haraprasad Shastri Dharma Thakur concept was evolved as a reaction against the Brahmanical oppression towards the Buddhists (*Narayan Patrika*, Magh, B.S. 1322). Sukumar Sen is opposed to this view. R.C. Majumdar is against Sen's view.

The oppression committed by the Brahmanas is clearly described in 'Niranjaner Rushma' and Dharma Thakur appeared in the garb of a Muslim and saved the *sat-dharmis* (i.e. the worshippers of Dharma). For the extracts from *Dharma Katha*, see Sen, Vol. 2. 133-36.

thren'. In answer to the question 'Ko Hindu Ko Muslaman' (who is Hindu, who is Muslim) it has been said :

হিন্দু পূজন্তি কাষ্ঠপাষাণে ।
মুসলমান পূজন্তি খোদায়
পুণ্য রেখ নাই '' [143]

(The Hindus worship wood and stone.
The Muslim worship Khoda
There is no difference in virtue).

In popular literature, as represented in these two 'Jālālis' a surprising spirit of harmony is discernible even in the midst of Hindu-Muslim clash. Not only in ceremony but in the fusion of Hindu gods and goddesses and *Khoda* and *Paigambar* of the Muslim. The *shastra* of Dharma Thakur is regarded as the Fifth Veda.[144] Many Islamic rites and customs have merged in the system of worship of Dharma Thakur. Like the Muslims the *Sat-dharmis* i.e. Dharma—worshippers offer oblations by cutting the throat partially of ducks or pigeons and cut the throat of beasts with their faces turned to the west i. e. towards Mecca. There is some novelty in the Jajpur episode of Rāmāi Pandit, for the *qurbani* of the Muslims has been described to be another sort of worship of Dharma Thakur and of Chandi.

সৈয়দ মৌলানা কাজি বৈসে স্থানে স্থানে,
ইদ পার্বন করে আনন্দিত মনে ।
নিরঞ্জন ভাবে তারা নিজ শাস্ত্র পড়ি,
বনের পশু আনি অর গলায় দেয় ছুরি ।
তথাএ খর্পর পাতি দেবী হন দিগম্বরী
নিরঞ্জ-রুধির পান করে মহেশ্বরী ।...., [145]

143. S. Sen, vol. 2., 136. Rites of worship may differ but there is no difference is achieving virtue (*punya*) *Rekh* stands for *rekna*. line or sign of difference.
144. *Ibid.*, 138.
145. *Ibid.*, 215-6.

The Sayyid, the Muslim teacher (*Maulana*) and *Qazi* (Judge), sit at different places and joyously celebrate the *Id* festival. Niranjan thinks that by following their own *Sāstras* (religious books) they apply the knife to the throats of the wild animals which they brought. There the Devi, after holding the *Kharpar* (skull as bowl), became nude. The *Maheswari* (The Great Mother Goddess) drinks the blood.

D. Jogi-Siddha Kathā or Nath Panth :

In this connection it is necessary to mention the religious books of the accounts of the *Jogi-Siddhas* or Nathism. The origin of the *Nathayogi Siddhais* (expert Natha Yogis) took place in the Pala age.[146] Nathism was born of the fusion of the old *Yoga* system of Patanjali, Tantricism of the Buddhists and the Hindus and Saiva-Agam theory. Adinath (Siva) was its super-natural originator. His attendant Matsyendra Nath or Mina Nath was the first human *Guru*. In the 10th century this Natha doctrine extended to Bengal, Assam, Nepal, Tibet and Northern India and later to Peshawar and Kabul. The Natha saints were not Brahmanas, but liberals, who accepted the essence of different doctrines. Any body could profess the Natha doctrine, irrespective of caste or religion. The story about the initial preceptor, Matsyendra or Minanath is super-natural. It is not known whether he was a *Kaivarlā* (fisherman) but the Yogi saints of the first era had affinity with fish. His disciple was Goraksanath. The Natha literature has grown around the stories associated with them. The central theme of *Goraksa-Vijaya* is this that the *Jibanmukta* (emancipated while living and exonerated from future birth) disciple will restore the infatuated *Guru* to his senses. In the opinion of Dr. Sukumar Sen this is a distinguished contribution of

146. Included in Natha Sahitya are *Goraksa Vijaya*, the story of Minanath and Gorakhanath, song of Raja Manik Chandra, *Sannyas* (Renunciation) of Gopichandra, Song of Maynamati, etc.
See Srimati Kalyani Mallik, *Nath Panth; Nath Sampradayer Itihas, Darshan & Sadhan Pranali; Nath Panth* (Viswa Bharati, B.S. 1357).

Bengal to world literature.[147] In subsequent ages there was no dearth of devotees, experts in Natha doctrine, even among the Muslims. They transformed Matsyendra first into 'Machhandar-Machhandali and still latter into 'Mochra Pir'. Hence innumerable Muslim words and similies have been used here and there in Natha literature. The influence of Islamic spirit and literature on it can easily be imagined. According to Dr. Sukumar Sen there were three poets (or old singers) of *Goraksa Vijaya*—Bhimsen or Bhimdas Rai, Syamadas Sen and Faizulla (? of Chatigaon area). The agreement between the writings of the last two is very profound. In the doggerel verses of Faizulla Arabic and Persian words are present for natural reasons.[148]

Goraksanath (c. 11th - 12th century), the disciple of Matsyendra, established a progressive organization of Kānphātta Yogis and preached a similar philosophy in various works and poems. A reputed Sufi saint, Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi held that he was not human, but Absolute Being, a Perfect soul, who realised oneness with God. Such a view of a Hindu on the eve of the Muslim conquest held by a Muslim is really surprising. Distinguished Chishti, Firdausi and Shattari Sufis used to mix with Natha Yogis to listen to their discourses and to exchange thoughts but they did not accept the doctrines of transmigration of the soul and of incarnation.

For four hundred years (13th—16th centuries) Natha and Sufi literatures mutually influenced each other. The influence of the wisdom of the Natha experts and Yogis on the Sufis is visible in a *Hathayogic* Tantrik religious book of the Nathas, written in Sanskrit, the *Amrita Kunda* (The Reservoir of Nectar). Qazi Ruknuddin Smarkandi, the Imam and chief *qazi* of

147. S. Sen, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, *Aparardha*, 225.
He holds that though the name of Minanath was not unrecognized in the 16th century, no *punthi* (ms.) of Minanath-Goraksanath story written before 18th century is available. Sen, Vol. 2, Ch. 8, p. 218.
The poets of the songs (stories) of Raja Manikchandra and Mayanamati's son Govinda (or Gopi) Chandra were Durlabh Mallick of Pātika Bhavan or Meherkul (modern Tripura), Bhavanidas of Tripura and Sukur Mahmud or Abdul Sukur of North Bengal.

148. S. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

Lakhnauti of the time of Ali Mardan Khalji, had this translated into Arabic and Persian (*Hauz ul Hayat*) with the help of a converted Bengali Tantrik Brahman Yogi of Kamarupa (1209-17), named Bhojar Brahman or Bajra Brahma (?). The importance of this work was so great that the famous Shattari saint, Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus (1500-63), translated it again. The Muslims prized this very highly and several times Arabic and Persian translations of this were made. As the concept regarding the Ultimate Reality (or God) of the Natha saints was similar to that of *Wahdat ul Wujud* (Unity of Being) of the Sufis the influence of Natha cult became forceful. During the 15th-18th centuries Sufi poets, inquisitive of the science of Yoga (abstract devotion and communion with the Supreme Being) had this *Amrita Kundā* translated into Bengali. Sayyid Sultan effected a fusion between Yoga and Sufism and composed *Jnana-Pradip* and *Jnanā-Chautisā*. Of course he strongly announced that he did not Hinduise Islam. But in contemporary literature the influence of local popular religious customs on the Sufis was plainly noticeable and a clear reflection of contemporary Hindu-Muslim fusion emerges. On the other hand the orthodox Muslims sought to apply the brake to the tendency to this acceleration. This became possible only after the Mughal conquest of Bengal, for this ended the period of Bengal's isolation.[149]

2. The Hint of Hindu-Muslim Fusion in Islamic Bengali Literature.

A. Romantic Poetry :

In medieval period, especially in Bengal of the Sultani rule, one significant facade of cultural synthesis is visible in literature. The stream of *Sahaj sādhanā*, that kept on flowing in Bengal after the Muslim conquest till 11th-13th century, coalesced with Sufi worship through the medium of the Muslim devotee-

149. See my Throughts on Trends of cultural Contact in Medieval India, (in press).

poets during the 14th-16th centuries.[150] The Hindu poets were primarily concerned with the stories of the greatness of the deities. On the other hand the Muslim poets kept the stream of romantic narrative poems and love-songs, current in the *Apabhramsa* era, unhindred.[151] They wrote numerous literary compositions on subjects touching Hindu gods and goddesses. All the writers of the first versified love fable, *Vidyasundar*, dealing with the majesty of Kali, were Hindu, except one. That exception was the Muslim poet, Sabirid Khan of the 17th century.

Two disciples of the renowned Chishti Sufi Pir of Northern India, Shaikh Burhan, Qutban[152] and Malik Muhammed Jayasi,[153] poets and devotees, composed respectively *Mrigavat* (*Mrigavati*) and *Padmavat* (*Padumavat*), romantic *cum* spiritually allegorical fables in verse. But those responsible for bringing the stream of Hindi and Persian romantic poetry to Bengal were two court-poets of Rosang (Arakan) of 17th century, Daulat Qazi and

150. The researchers in the field of Islami Bangla Sahitya,—Abdul Karim Sahityacharya, Abdul Ghafur Siddiqi Anusandhan - Visharad, Muhammad Shahidullah, Enamul Huq, Muhammad Mansur ud din, Satyendra Nath Ghoshal, Sultan Ahmad Bhuyan, Sukumar Sen and others. Sen has described it as the confluence of the Ganges and Jamuna *Islami Bangha Sahitya*, Burdwan, B.S. 1358, p. 4.

151. Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Aparardha, Ch. 22, pp. 5, 14.

152. Qutban was a follower of Sultan Husain Shah, Sharqi Sultan of Jaunpur. Afraid of Delhi he came with the fugitive Sultan to Bengal to seek shelter with Sultan Husain Shah (of Bengal) at Gaud and wrote *Mrigavat* 909/1512. Sen, *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, 8-10.
Of the three poets who followed Qutban's *Mrigavat*, one was a Muslim (middle of 19th century), and the other two were Hindus (end of 17th century). The poem of Dwija Pasupati was well-known to the Muslim readers. Depending on these *punthis* (mss.) a poem named *Chandravali* has been printed. Sen, *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, 34-40. Other romantic Stories, *ibid.*, 41-43.

153. Muhammad Jayasi was a resident of village Jayas in Ayodhya (Awadh, Oudh). The writing of the poem started in 923/1520 and it was finished after 1540 (during Sher Shah's time). He died in 1542.
'Padmavat' was an excellent composition not only in Awadhi literature but in entire literature of India' (Sukumar Sen, p. 10). He thinks that perhaps Jayasi composed it in Bengal as it was there that the poem was first publicised. *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, Aparardha, 330.

Alaol. An account of these two has been given before. Here we will briefly discuss their contribution to literary synthesis. The Sufi devotee, poet Daulat Qazi, was at once the greatest Bengali Muslim poet and one of the most powerful poets of old Bengali literature. The poem *Sati Mayna* (whose first part was *Lor-Chandrani*), which Daulat Qazi composed on the basis of the story of the 16th century. (*Mian*) *Main* Sadhan's Awadhi *Mainasat* (i. e. *Mayna Sati*) is an incomplete *Pānchāli* poem. Here, along the adoration of Allah and Rasul (i. e. Prophet), the mention of Dwaraka of Krishna, dramatic performance of description of twelve months (bāramāsya pālā) various melodies, stories of *Purānas*, Hindu dress and *Kirtan* of name of Hari, is full of deep purport. It also bears the clear impress of Vaishnava lyrics.[154]

The poetical works of erudite and accomplished Alaol deserve special mention in connection with Hindu-Muslim synthesis. He has been honoured as 'talim-ālim' by the Muslims of Arakan. Though a cavalier, he was a linguist and proficient in song, drama and art. Alaol's knowledge of different languages, depth of his devotion to Sufistic lore, his sincerity comparable to that of a Vaishnava poet and knowledge of the path to *Yoga*, have been reflected in supplementing Daulat Qazi's incomplete *Sati Mayna* (or *Lor Chandrani*), in translating Jayasi's *Padmavat* and in altering it at places or improving its standard and in translating books relating to Sufism. Though he know Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Bengali and Hindi, he has not used many Arabic and Persian words. But by translating Persian poems (e. g. *Haft Paikar* as *Sapta Paykar* and *Sikandarnama*) and religious works in Arabic, he introduced 'Pure Islamic Mode' in Bengali literature.[155]

B. Muslim Purāna Pānchāli :

(Poetical works narrating and praising the glory of Muslim heroes)

Towards the end of the 16th century and the early part of the 17th century a tendency was noticeable in literature, viz., to

154. S. Sen, *op. cit.*, 321-26; *Islami Bangla Sahitya.*
155. *Ibid.*, 327-43; *ibid*; the books have been mentioned before

write the lives of the Prophet and the Caliphs in Bengali, the mother-tongue. It was on the basis of the translations of the Islāmic religious works written in Arabic and Persian and imported (to Bengal) or of their changed forms that compositions then started in Bengali. The authors, writing according to the Islamic mode, now composed the lives of the preachers of Islam and the stories of the repression of the *Kafirs* (infidels) by casting them in the matrix of *Harivamsa* and *Pandava-Vijaya*, under the influence of the Bengali Hindu Purana Pānchāli. This is of two kinds : (1) Stories of the *Paighambar* (Prophet), *Navi-Vamsa, Rasul-Vijaya, Rasul-namah, Muhammad-Vijaya*, written in 17th-18th century; (ii) *Kāchhā-chhol Ambia* (*Kasasol* Ambia, Muslim religious preacher) or stories of *Nabis*; and victorious campaigns of the *khalifas* (caliphs), *Jang-namah* or accounts of wars,—written in 19th century.

(i) Among the authors of pānchālis (poetical works) on *Navi-Vamsa* (Family of the Prophet), *Rasul-Vijaya* (Prophet's victories) a distinguished place is occupied by the Sufi-Yogi-devotee-poet Sayyid Sultan, an inhabitant of Paragalpur within the jurisdiction of Chatigaon. He composed *Navi-Vamsa* and *Jangnama*, two religious books of the Muslims and a Tantrik treatise on the science of Yoga, named *Jnana-Pradipa* or *Jnana-Chautisa*. The Sanskrit name *Harivamsa* has been imitated in *Navi-Vamsa* and the author has utilised the Hindu Sāstras. That the author, besides referring to the Islamic cosmogony and the advent of the prophets, has considered Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and Krishna as Nabis (Prophets) is an illustration of his religious liberalism. At its conclusion *Shabe Meyeraj* is perhaps his last work. We get an idea of his poetic faculty and spiritual eagerness from his musical wreath of verses based on the Supreme Being. The verse describing the beauty of Krishna is suffused with Vaishnava sentiments.[156]

156. *Ibid.*, 344-5; *ibid.*
Residence, in Enamul Huq, Kavi Syed Soltan, *Sahitya Parisad Patrika*, Pt. 41, pt. 2, pp. 38-55. According to Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya he was born in the famous Sayyid family of Laskarpur, Habiganj sub-division, Srihatta dt. *Bange Muslaman Kavi*. 130-1.

(ii) *Jangnamah* or *accounts of wars*,—the story of conquest of Iran by the preachers of Islam, the early caliphs, and of internecine quarrels. The pathetic story of Kerbala was highly adored among the masses of the Bengali Muslims. The following poets among its composers are worthy of mention:

(a) Muhammad Khan, poet of Chatigaon (1056/1646)—Maqutal Hosain i. e. Maqutul Husayan. (? Maqatil-i-Husain);

(b) Saiyyid Sultan ;

(c) Nasrulla Khan, poet of Chatigaon (beginning of 18th century);

(d) Mansur of Chatigaon (? Sufistic) - *Amir Jangnamah* ;

(e) Hayat or Hiyat Mahmud of North Bengal - *Ambiavani* (B. S. 1165/A. D. 1758) ; *Jang-namah* or Muharram canto (A.D. 1723); Bengali translation (A.D. 1732) of the Persian translation of *Hitopadesh* ; Treatise on Islamic subjects, *Hitajñana vāni* (A. D. 1753) ;

(f) Garibullah, poet of West Bengal—*Jangnamah* of Amir Hamza, mid-18th century ; incomplete. This was completed by Sayyid Hamza (1792) ;

(g) A Hindu poet, Radhacharan Gope, (? inhabitant of Birbhum), too, wrote a large *Jangnamah* probably in 18th century. The copy of the ms. is dated A. D. 1827—*Imam Ener Kechcha* or *Imamer Jang*.

Nabivamsa : There is some difference of opinion about the date of composition, depending on the reading of the text. According to Sukumar Sen, 'দশশতরসযুগে অব্দ' would yield 1064 AH/1654-5; but if 'Yuga' means 2, it would be 1062/1652-1653. *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, 344-5. According to Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya,

'গ্রহশতরসযোগে অব্দ' would yield 906 AH/end of 1500.

Syed Sultan has stated the reasons for writing *Nabivamsa* in his *Ofat-i-Rasul*. "All Bengalis do not understand Arabic; none realizes the message of Religion. Everyone is satisfied with (Hindu) tales. He wrote *Nabivamsa* to undermine the influence of Paragali *Mahabharat*.

Zainuddin and Shaikh Chand, too, composed *Nabivamsa*.

C. Pir Ballads :

The position of the *Pirs* in society has already been discussed before. The literature that grew on them is called Pir Ballads. The Muslim virtuous saints, Sufis, *Pirs* and *faqirs* set foot in Bengal even before the Turkish conquest.[157] They were engaged not only in preaching religion but were directly involved in campaigns of victory, destruction of temples, images and *viharas*, plunder even in administration. The picture drawn in the *Dharmakatha* that they 'demolished temples, buildings, took (things) by force, roamed hither and thither and ate merrily' is a very realistic picture. Hence many evoked fear in the minds of the populace. Again at times the populace used to show veneration to some saints or *pirs* for the excellence of their character or supernatural deeds or esoteric achievements. The Sufis' venerations for the *Pir*, *Murshid* (*Guru*), too, had influence on the Bengali mind. Besides this the natural weakness of the populace for the esoteric achievements of the Yogi and Tantric *sadhus* lay at the root of this veneration. The third factor was the influence of Vaishnavism. The religion of Sri Chitanya pulverised 'the dam of separation between the Hindus and the Muslims'. He sought to remove some of the divisions between the Muslim *Pir* and the Brahman *Sannyasi* by preaching *Krishna-bhakti* (piety to Krishna) and *Nām-nisthā* (devotion to the name of the deity) to all, irrespective of religion. No insurmountable social obstacle now remained for a Hindu to receive the initiation from a Muslim *sādhu* (*Zinda Pir*, living saint) or to show veneration to him. A reference to the ballad of the majesty of the *pir* in literature is to be found in *Sekshubhodayā* written in 15th-16th centuries.[158]

In the *Pir Pānchālis* (poetical works praising the glory of the *Pir*) (composed in the 17th century specially towards its latter part), we get a blending of the Dharma Thakur of the Buddhists, the *Pir* of the Muslims and the *Narayan* of the Hindus.[159] It

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157. This has been discussed earlier. It is known also from *Sekshubhodaya*, ed. Sukumar Sen.
158. The majesty of the *Pir* has been discussed previously. See *Sekshubhodaya*, Ch. 17.
159. Dharma Thakur is dressed as *faqir*. Ruparam Chakravarti (*faqir*). S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, Aparardha, 449-66.

was in Bengal towards the closing epoch of the Muslim rule that the first efforts towards the fusion of religions was made from both parties through the medium of the fable of Satya Pir-Satya Narayan. And the 'Book of Satya Pir' was composed for both the communities. Dr. Sukumar Sen says that the scribes of the *Pir Ballads* were Hindus, the singers were Muslims, but their composers were the poets of both communities. Some portions of these *Pānchālis* include compositions on the manner of ceremonial worship of this new deity, some are rooted in popular stories and some are based on fables with Muslim ideas. Numerous Hindu writers from West Bengal to Assam composed Satya Narayan or Satya-Pir *Pānchālis* by equating Rahim of Mecca with Ram of Ayodhya.[160] There is considerable similarity between the *pānchāli* of Rameshwer Bhattacharya and the fable of Faizullah of West Bengal. The story of Faizullah contains clear hints of communal synthesis. In the beginning he has saluted the adorable deities of both the communities, and then writes

তুমি ব্রহ্মা, তুমি বিষ্ণু, তুমি নারায়ণ
শুন গাজী আপনি আসরে দেহ মন।

You are Brahma, You are Vishnu, You Narayan,
Listen, O *Ghazi*, pay heed yourself to (preaching in) the assembly (i. e. instead of fighting).

Of all the *Pānchālis* composed by the Muslims this deserves mention most. The ballad of Faizullah is the chief proof of how far the two communities 'had coalesced into one' in religion and culture.[161]

160. S. Sen, *Islami Bangle Sahitya*, [80-81. Discussion re: name. S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, 452-55.
161. Faizullah is an inhabitant of Pachna village in Dakshin Rarh in W. Bengal.
Adorable (*upasya*) : Salutation to Allah, Muhammad Mustaffa, Pānjātan Pir, Four Companions (*yār*) of the Rasul (Prophet), and along with local *pirs* and *piranis* a few names among the Hindus,—Gopinath of Khanakul, Krishna-Balaram, Debaki and Rohini of Vrindaban, Sachi Thakurani (mother of Sri Chaitanya), and Gorachand (i.e. Chaitanya).

In some *Pānchāli* compositions Satyapir is not a god but a human being. According to Dr. Sukumar Sen, as there is no 'historical material' in it, its 'search is meaingless'. He further says, 'The fable contains tradition and an endeavour to pursue time and place.[162] Hence it is possible to get here materials for social history. The *Satyapir pānchāli* of Krishnahari Sarkar (Das) of North Bengal, disciple of Taher Mahmud Sarkar, belonging to the *Baul-Darwesh* community, has been described as the 'biggest and strangest.[163] Here Satya Pir is the son born of an unmarried Brahman girl. Bali, the king of Pātāl (nether world) and *Khawaj Zinda Pir* (below the water) have been mentioned together. As regards the contrariety between Brahmanism and Islam the Brahman said that one loses his caste by reading the Quran at its very beginning there is the *Bismilla haraf*. In reply Satyapir gives the following argument :

এক ব্রহ্ম বিনে আর দুই ব্রহ্ম নাই
সকলের কর্তা এক নিরঞ্জন গোঁসাই।
ব্রহ্মা বিষ্ণু মহেশ্বর যার নাম জপে
অনন্ত ব্রহ্মাণ্ড যার এক লোমকূপে।
হস্ত নাহি পদ নাহি ধরেছে সংসার
মুখ নাহি আছে তার করিতে আহার।
কর্ণ নাহি কথা শোনে, চক্ষু নাহি দেখে
চিনিতে না পারে কেহ সর্বঘটে থাকে।
সেই নিরঞ্জনের নাম বিছমিল্লা কয়
বিষ্ণু আর বিছমিল্লা কিছু ভিন্ন নয়।

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162. S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, 463.
163. S. Sen, *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, 81.
164. Quoted in S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, 465.
Some fairy tales have been elevated to ballads in honour of *pirs* *e.g.* (*i*) Lalmoner *Kechcha* or tale of 'Arif, inhabitant of Tajpur, Dakshin Rarh in West Bengal; (*ii*) 'Sashisona', 'Sashisena', 'Sakhisona' or 'Sakhisena' of Fakirram Kavibhusan. S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, 465-66; *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, 68-81.

Except one Brahma no two Brahmas exist,
Lord of all is one Niranjan Gosain,
In whose name Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwar mutter prayers,
In one pore of whose skin lies the endless universe.
Without hands, without legs, he holds the world,
He has no mouth to eat,
He hears without ears, sees without eyes,
None can recognise Him though He is omnipresent.
Bismillah is but another name of that very same Niranjan,
Vishnu and Bismillah are not at all distinct.

So Satyapir, Satya Narayan, Vishnu and Bismillah, Allah and Niranjan have all become fused into one. Hence the view of the deceased savant Ramesh Chandra Majumdar that Satyapir was the god of the Muslims and Satya Narayan of the Hindus does not appear to be correct; at least at the time of the rise of this worship.

Manik Pir was acknowledged by the Sufis, at times holding the same place as Jesus and at other times identical with *Isa Nabi*. He is not a composite deity like Satyapir.[165]

D. Āthāro Bhātir Pānchāli (Pānchāli of the Eighteen Bhātis).

From the middle of the 17th century the area watered by the lower Bhagirathi grew prosperous for several reasons. For the propagation of the worship of a few new popular or non-Pauranik and local gods and goddesses some *Mangal Kavyas* (eulogistic poems) also were written. The inhabitants of the Sunderbans area, enriched by the deltaic alluvium, had to be in constant fear of snakes, tigers and crocodiles. Hence in the eastern regions of 24-Parganas, western regions of old Jessore district, Khulna and Noakhali the frightened human beings became accustomed for fear of their lives, to worship the corresponding presiding gods and goddesses from a pretty long time. The eulogistic account (*mangal kathā*) of the serpent—goddess, Manasa, has been mentioned before. One of the tutelary deities of the Mongols, the evil spirit of Tiger-Man, came to be transformed in course of time in South Bengal into Tiger-god Dakshin Rai. The crocodile god become Kalu Rai. These are the presiding deities in *Rai-Mangal* of Krishnaram Das (1608 Saka/1686-87). The guardian deity of the Hindu hunters, wood-cutters, shepherds and collectors of honey and wax in these areas is the *Banadevi* (Forest-goddess) *Mangal Chandi* and is worshipped as Bana-Durga.

165. There is no connection with the word 'Manikya'. Maniki (Manichee) is derived from Greek Manikhaios. He is a new religious preacher of 2nd or 3rd century, developing out of the synthesis of Iranianism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity. S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, *Aparardha*, 466. The composer of 'Manikpirer Geet' (Manikpir's song) was Anath Fakir (end of 18th century) a resident of village Dhansishye (or Sishya?) in Azimabad. S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, op. cit. 466.

From the end of the 18th century an effort is noticeable to depict the acknowledged eulogistic fables of popular Hindu gods and goddesses as ballads of fame of Muslim *pirs* and *pirānis* (wives of *pirs*). Here there is agreement as well as clash : later on comes friendship. Hence there is a remarkable consistency between the medieval current of history, Hindu-Muslim relations and this literary trend.

(i) From the standpoint of agreement we get three currents : (a) An effort among the Muslims to create likenesses of Hindu gods and goddesses; in the song of Manik Pir, composed by Anath Fakir, Manik Pir is just an echo of Siva; Pir Machhandali (Machra Pir in East Bengal now Bangladesh) is just a mixture of Nath-Guru Matsyendra and the Fighting *Pir* Masnadi-Ali; Bana-Bibi is a metamorphosis of Bana-Durga and the eulogistic *Pānchāli* of *Bana-Bibi* (*Zahura-namah*) corresponds to the fable of *Mangalachandi*; *Bana-Bibir Tala* (site) is still worshipped in West Bengal. (b) The same crocodile (Alligator) deity is equally divided among the two communities; Kālu Rai of the Hindus, *Magar Pir* Kālu Shah of the Muslims. (c) A Hindu *thakur*, even after becoming a Muslim *Pir* is known by his former Hindu name, as for example Pir Gorachand of Burdwan and 24-Parganas.

(ii) Clash is indicated when a *Pir* became the adversary of a Hindu deity, e.g., Dakshin Rai is the god of the Hindus in South Bengal and Bara Khan Ghazi among the Bengali Musalmans is the lord of the south. Kalu Rai is the ally of Dakshin

Rai, and Kalu Shah of Bara Khan. The story of this clash is also followed in the fable of Bana-Bibi.

The Muslim poets sought to satisfy 'the thirst for religion and search for poetry of the populace' by writing eulogistic verses of these new gods and goddesses. Whatever might have been their literary excellences, the cultural history of Bengal, specially in the field of discussion of Hindu-Muslim relations, is very significant. The clash, mentioned in Dakhin Rai and Bara Khan Ghazi fable, may as well be connected with the contemporary religious movement in Bengal. In *Rai Mangal* the Hindu poet has not brought down the greatness of the two heroes. But in '*Ghāzi Sāheber Gān* or *Ghazi Mangal* the Muslim author has described Dakshin Rai as defeated hence inferior. Of course in the two works (*Mangals*) the clash ended in friendship.[166]

E. Muslim Poets with Vaishnava sentiments :

Besides Islamic Bengali literature, poems of several Muslim poets, soaked in Vaishnava sentiments, too, carried the noble message of religious synthesis and religious tolerance. Professor Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya has referred to 162 poets and a little above 900 verses. Most of them were inhabitants of Eastern Bengal (now Bangladesh)—versifiers of Srihatta (Sylhet), Chatigaon, Tripura, and Mymensingh exceed those of other places. There are a few, of course, of the 18th century. But according to Professor Sasibhusan Dasgupta most of them belong to 19th and 20th centuries. The cultural value of the poems and songs, even though these are late, is extremely significant. For these are of special help in understanding the oneness of the Bengali nation and the stream of the mental

166. S. Sen, *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, 82-101; *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, 538-9, 469.

There is reference to Hindu-Muslim clash (Dakshin Ray *vs.* Ghazi) in *Ghazi Saheber Gan* or *Kalu Ghazi-Champavati Panchali* of Abdul Ghafoor and also to friendship,—marriage of Champavati, daughter of Mukut Ray, king of the Southern Kingdom, with the Ghazi Syed Hālu Miyan, 'Bare Khan Ghazir Keramati'; Abdul Rahimer *Ghazir Punthi* (? inhabitant of Mymensingh).

evolution.[167]

The poems which these Muslim Vaishnavas have composed regarding the amorous sports of Radha and Krishna are apparently unusual. But this has become possible on the soil of Bengal. Most Bengali Muslims were born of Hindu families. The old instincts manifested themselves at times like the subterranean Phalgu. Among the converts to Islam the natural facade of the cultivation of Hinduism had not altogether dried up. Hence even the Muslims have adopted the name of the beloved 'Kanu'. The memory of Srikrishna of the *Gita* might have been wiped out but the picture of Radha-Krishna as the symbol of love must have been resplendent. The stream of Vaishnava love of Sri Chaitanya deluged not merely the hearts of the Hindus, but even sprinkled the Muslims too. The poets of Bengal, saturated with Sufi sentiments, in order to explain the love-oriented relation between the individual soul and the Supreme Being, accepted the national allegory of Bengal, the amorous play of Radha-Krishna in place of the Sufi love-stories of the Persian literature, so that it becomes easily intelligible to the Hindu singers and listeners.[168]

In this essay only a few Muslim poets with Vaishnava sentiments can be mentioned. The name of Alāol, inhabitant of Faridpur district in the 17th century has already been noted. Nawazish of that century was perhaps an inhabitant of village

167. Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya, *Banglar Vaishnava Bhavapanna Musalman Kavi* (1945/1962), and its revised and enlarged edition . . . *Kavir Padamanjusha* (to be pub. by Cal. Univ.). He has classified the poems under five categories. Sashi Bhusan Dasgupta, '*Banglar Musalman Vaishnav Kavi*', pub. Viswabharati-Patrika, B.S. 1363 (Magh-Chaitra).

See also Ramani Mohan Mallik ed. *Musalman Vaishnav Kavi*; Brajasundar Sanyal, compiled *Musalmah Vaishnav Kavi*, 4 Vols. Other articles on the subject are referred to in Bhattacharya's book (148-51). The essays written by Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad and Munshi Ekramuddin are valuable.

168. For reasons, see Bhattacharya, pp. 1-5; It is difficult to ascertain how some became inclined towards Vaishnavism,

Comparable with the Muslim Vaishnava Padavali are *Brajangana Kavya* of Michael Madhusudan and *Bhanusingher Padavali* of Rabindra Nath (even though he was not an orthodox Vaishnav).

Sukhachhari, in *thanah* Sātkāniā in Chittagong district.[169] During the 18th century Ali Raza, a resident of village Oshkhāin within the jurisdiction of Bānskhali,. district Chittagong, was better known as 'Kanu Fakir!' His *guru* was Qeyamuddin. Ali composed two Darweshi works, *'Siraj Kulup'*, and *'Jnana-sagar'*, two Tantric works, *Yoga Kālandar* and *Satchakrabheda* and one musical work,—*Dhyānmālā*, dealing with *rāgas* and *rāginis*, *tāl* and their origin.[170] Lālan Faqir (1775-1891), a resident of Bhānrorā or Bhānrārā within Kusthia, was initiated by Darwesh Sirāj Sāin according to Baul Sahajiya or Sufi way.[171]

Most poems of devout Vaishnavas can be regarded as Radha-Krishna allegories. The Sufi Pir and Vaishnav abbot Sayyid Martuza (? Murtaza) prays,

'পার কর মোরে নাইয়া কানাই'

'O' boatman Kanai ! Take me across' i.e.

Take me across the sea of the world on the boat of *Bhakti* (piety). He is 'ghāter ghātiāl' (the *ghātwal*) or one who directs the passengers about the ferries. He is the '*panther chowkidar*' (i.e. as he protects him from allurements on the path of piety.[172] Another poet, Lal Mahmud, says of himself,

' এবার ... হরেকৃষ্ণ নাম
করেছে সার'

169. J.M. Bhattacharya, 116.

170. *Ibid.*, 110, 111, 126; Karunapada Dutt, Journal of Indian Research Institute.
Ali Raza had two sons and disciples. (*i*) Sarfotullah, born of his second wife, (*ii*) Ershadullah, poet of the last quarter of 18th century.
See S. Sen, *Hist of Bengali Lit.* (1971), 148; Munshi Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad, Punthisangraha; Asit Kumar Bandopadhyay, *Bangla Sahityer Itibritta*, Vol. 3. 791.

171. Lālan's name is well-known.

172. Identity unknown, perhaps an inhabitant of Chittagong. He calls himself *Janamer faqir & ghazi*. His grave is near Murshidabad. See S. Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, Aparardha, 536.

(now Lal Mahmud has found the essence in the name Hare-krishna). He writes :

হিন্দু কিম্বা হৌক মুসলমান ।
তোমার পক্ষে সবাই সমান ॥
আপন সন্তান জাতির কি বিচার ।
ভক্ত সকল জাতির শ্রেষ্ঠ, চণ্ডাল কি চামার ॥
কেহ তোমায় বলে কালী, কেহ বলে বনমালী ।
কেহ খোদা আল্লা বলি তোমায় ডাকে সারাৎসার ॥" [173]

"Whether (one is) Hindu or Musalman,
It's immaterial to you.
None judges the caste of one's son.
The devout, a *Chandal* or a *tanner*, is the best of all castes,
"Some call you Kali, some Banamali.
Others as Khoda Alla, You are the Supreme Being.

From the above few examples it is proved that it was in Bengal that at one time the message of Hindu-Muslim friendship was uttered by Muslims and what a degree of eagerness lay behind the message !

The influence of Yoga system has also fallen on the natural cultivation of love (*sahaj prem sadhana*). The common belief is that the Supreme Beloved resides within our body, which is like a house. The same sentiments or the same tune run through the *Sahajiya* songs of the Buddhists[174], the *Sahajiya* songs of the Vaishnavas[175], in the thought of the Sufi devotees of India.[176] In fact to the Bauls of Bengal the body itself is the temple. The

173. He was born in a poor family in village Bāoidahar near Narayandahar in Netrakona Subdivision, Mymensingh Dt. His elder brother's name was Kalu.

174. দেহ হিঁ বুদ্ধ বসন্ত ন জানই ।

175. বস্তু আছে দেহ বর্তমানে । (বস্তু = তত্ত্ব)

176. 'He who knoweth himself knoweth God',—saying of Muhammad, by Sir A. Suhrawardy (1938), 53.

same emotion pervades the descriptions of the love sports of Radha-Krishna of the Muslim Vaishnava poets of Bengal, the poems and songs dealing with the physiology-based relation of the individual Soul and the Supreme Being. One is the house (*ghar*) the other is *gharini* (*gharani*, dweller). If Krishna represented the house, Radha was the dweller. If Radha was the house, Krishna was the house-holder. This dalliance between the *deha* (body, shape) and *dehi* (embodied soul), the *murta* (corporeal) and *amurta* (incorporeal), *sima* (*limit*) and *asim* (limitless) constitutes the inscrutable mystery of the Absolute.[177] Poet Shahanur describes the body to be the tryst of Rādhā and Kānu. *'Tan Rādhā, Man Kanu'* i.e. Rādhā is the body, Kānu or Krishna is *man* (mind, here soul). Again, *'Radhar mandire Kānu āchhila parabasi* (i.e. in Radha's abode or this transitory body *Kānu* or the eternal soul was like a sojourner). Again some say just the reverse. *'Man Radha Tan Kanu'*, *'Chaliyā jaibe nithur Radha, Kanu haiba nāsh'*. (Poet Uchhman or Usman). Here *Radha* represents mind or soul, *Kanu* only the body. So if cruel Radha (*prān*) leaves i.e. if life becomes extinct Kanu, the body, is destroyed.[178]

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cf. "I am He whom I love
And He whom I love is I.
We are two spirits dwelling one body.
If thou seest me, thou seest Him
And if thou seest Him
Thou seest us both."

(R.A. Nicholson, Islamic Mysticism, p. 80)

Compare Kabir Bani (Vol. I, 13-14).

मो को कहाँ ढुड़ों बन्दे, मैं तो तेरे पास में ।
ना मैं देयल ना मैं मसाजन न कावे, कैलास में ॥
कहें कबीर सुनो भाई साधो, सब स्वांसो की स्वास में ।

Where are you searching me, O devotee, I am just beside you. I am neither in temple nor in mosque, neither in Kaaba, nor Kailas, Says Kabir. Listen, Brother Sadhu, I am in the breath of all breaths." Vol. 2, 102; Vol. 3. 2-3.

177. Sashi Bhusan Dasgupta, Viswa Bharati Patrika.
178. Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya, 17-24.

In the songs composed by the Muslim poets on Radha-krishna *lila* different sentiments and terms, associated with the pursuit of *Yoga* are often found scattered in various forms. It is quite clear from the song of Ghulam Huchhan (? Husain) that Muslim poets reached the very depths of *Yoga* and that this would not have been possible if there had been no cultural synthesis between the Hindus and the Muslims.
He writes

আকাচ্চা কাষ্ঠের নাওখানি যমুনার মাঝ ।
কাঞ্চ কুরা কালা নিশান শুধু রাধার সাজ ॥
আখির মাঝে আখি খুলি রাই নিরখিয়া চাও ।
নায়ের মাঝে আছে হরি চরণে নেপুর দিও ॥
কর্ণের মাঝে কর্ণ দিয়া রাই নাশিকায় দাঁড় বাইও ।
মুখের মাঝে মুখ দিয়া রাই হরির মধু খাইও ॥
গলুই এর মধ্যে নায়ের পন্থ রাই সর্গ মুখে যায় (ধায়)
সুপন্থে চালিলে রাধা হরির লাগ পায় ॥ "৫"

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179. It is not known who was Ghulam Huchhan (Husain), where he lived. But the song in question was published in an article entitled 'Asamiya Muchhalmani Punthi' by Chhaha Chhaiyad Hachhan Ali (Shah Sayyid Hasan Ali) in *Avahan*, Aghon (Agrahayan), 1854 Saka/1932-3, pp. 223-4. According to S.B. Dasgupta he was most probably an inhabitant of Shrihatta, *Viswa Bharati Patrika*. The language of Ghulam Huchchhan is not very correct, there are numerous mistakes in spelling. But the depth of the emotion and knowledge of yoga are commendable. The sense of the first two lines has been explained in the text. The various words and phrases are sought to be explained below.

আকাচ্চা কাষ্ঠের নাও i.e. boat of unseasoned or unripe or worthless wood. কাঞ্চ or কাঁচা (*Kānchā*) raw or immature;

কুরা or the bamboo pole to shove the boat;

the green colour of raw bamboo looks black i.e. not suitable for journey; শুধু রাধার সাজ only outward forms without

(Substance only) Just as it is not possible to cross the Jabuna (i.e. Jamuna in Bengal) by sailing on a boat of unseasoned wood and using unripe bamboo pole to shove it forward, so unless the body is purified by *Yoga* it will be of no avail to display the yogi's show outwardly. The poet has also indicated the procedure of performing the *Yoga*.

inner preparation, compare Rabindranath's famous lines

মন না রাঙায়ে কি ভুল করিয়ে কাপড় রাঙালে যোগী

i.e. a yogi, who without colouring his mind. only colours his cloth, commits a mistake. যমুনা or যবুনা in Eastern Bengal which is known to be very formidable. It symbolises the boisterous period in man's life-currents. In the following lines the poet has explained the yogic procedure. Do not keep your eyes of knowledge closed, open them and see. Discover and realise the Beloved (i.e. God) within the body (see f.n. 102). In the joy of realisation wear trinkets to your feet. In the next two lines the poet enters the depths of yogic procedures. 'কর্নের মাঝে কর্ন দিয়া'

i.e. one has to turn one's senses inward 'নাশিকায় দাঁড় বাইও'

i.e. ply the oar of your boat with the nose i.e. by control of breath (*Pranayam* of Hindus and *pass i-anfas* of the Sufis).

মুখের মাঝে মুখ means identity or unity of man with God. গলুই এর মধ্যে নায়ের পন্থ. Just as the stern gives the direction of the boat's way so the nerves within the body hints at *chakrasadhana*.

'রাই সর্গ (অর্থাৎ স্বর্গ বা ঊর্দ্ধ) মুখে যায় বা বাঁয়

means the

সাধিকগণের উল্টা সাধনা বা ঊর্দ্ধ সাধনার ব্যঞ্জনা

A few Muslim Vaishnava poets have indicated God by using the name Radha-Krishna. To Hāchhan Raja Chaudhury (?Husain Raza) of Srihatta (Sylhet) district there is no difference between Radha and Khuda. He has addressed Radha as Rahim and Rabbani.

রাধা বলিয়া ডাকিলে মুল্লা মুন্সীরে দেয় বাধা।
মুল্লা মুন্সীর কথা যত সকলই বেহুদা ॥

If one calls Radha *Mullas* and *munshis* oppose. The words of *mullahs* and *munshis* are all senseless.[180] The poet has criticized the orthodox attitude.

Some again have used the name of Radha-Krishna in connection with popular love.[181] In the poems of many that name does not specifically occur but these bear the latent impress of the (divine) play. Again they have used the names Gaur, Gora, and Gorachand in poems dealing only with Gauranga (i.e. Sri Chaitanya). In connection with Jagai and Madhai Lal Mahmud writes that thanks to the incarnation of Gaur the man of iron was transformed into gold.[182]

180. He is the son (1261-1329 B.S.) of Ali Raza Chaudhury, an inhabitant of village Rampasha in Sadr Subdivision, Srihatta Dt. His ancestors were Dakshin Rarhi Kayasthas. One collection of songs, by Hachhan Udas, p. 67. J.M. Bhattacharya, 25-6.

Compare: Ramkrisha—water is one; Kabir—Ram, Khoda, Siva, Sakti; Yakrang (Muslim poet in Hindi)—Ahmed, Isa, Ram; Ramprasad—

যে তোমায় যে ভাবে ডাকে
তাতে তুমি হও মা রাজী

(Mother, you respond to whatever way a man hails you).

181. Compare,

'দেবতারে প্রিয় করি প্রিয়েরে দেবতা' (রবীন্দ্রনাথ)

(Making the god my beloved, and the beloved my god). J.M. Bhattacharya, 26-28.

182. Ibid., 28-35.

F. Significance of Islami Bengali Literature and Muslim Vaishnava Poetry.

On the soil of Bengal what an unprecedented change took place among the monotheist followers of Islam, hostile to the infidels ? Remaining within the fold of Islam, but crossing the narrow limit of communalism, and casting off all hesitations, these Muslim poets and writers composed books on Hindu religion, wrote songs in honour of Kali, described the greatness of Kali, wrote authoritative works on Natha literature (e.g. Shukur Mahmud, *Gopichander Sannyas* and Faizullah, *Gorak-savijaya*). Daulat Qazi and Alaol wrote on *Padmavati* and *Lor Chandrani*. Even now many othodox Hindus after taking bath in the Ganges, recite the *Gangāstak* (hymn to the *Ganga*) composed in Sanskrit by Darāf Khān, the Muslim poet of Tribeni. Far from being reproached by contemporary Muslims for his pro-Hindu sentiments he was felicitated instead.

At Tribeni ghat I adored Darāf Khān, whose water for ablutions the Ganges supplied.

ত্রিবেণীর ঘাটেতে বন্দিনু দরাফ খান
গঙ্গা যাঁর ওজুর পানি করিত যোগান ।

(*Jangnamah*, Kāvyamālancha, p. 31)

The Muslim Vaishnava poets not only composed songs on Radha-Krishna dalliance, but even made the Hindu gods and goddesses their own. They wrote on the *Baramāsyā* (account of 12 months of Radhika[183] and Nimai. Besides this, numerous Muslim devotees, attracted by the procedure of Indian devotional practices, studied the *Yoga-sāstra* and after acquiring the deepest insight into the true principles and philosophy of *Yoga-tantra*, composed books on it. Some Muslims have even admitted the *satchakra*. Among the works written in Bengali those worthy of mention are Ali Raza's books, characterised by mixture of love and Yoga,—*Jnāna-sagār*, *Yoga Kālandar* and

183. Poet Hashim—Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad. *Purnima*, B.S. 1309. *Asar* p. 92. Quoted. J.M. Bhattacharya, 35-6.

Satchakra. *Jnāna-sagar* is an extraordinary fusion of the ideas of popular Hinduism and popular Islam.[184] The terminology is Islamic but the subject is Hindu *yoga*. In Bengal's social and cultural history, specially in the discussion of the present subject matter, it is of exceeding importance. It seems as if the united devotional exercises of the two communities has been depicted here.

184. Works by Ali Raza. Many, however, regard Yoga Kalandar to have been written by Sayyid Murtaza.

7

Conclusion

In presenting this account of communal relations in medieval Bengal I must admit that it is brief and not yet complete in all respects. All source materials are still not available. Even what is available could not be studied and utilised wholly for lack of time and space. Still on the basis of whatever little/tit-bits of information have been collected in my beggar's bowl, there is no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that notwithstanding the very strong religious differences and social exclusiveness the two communities were gradually coming closer together. A few Sultans, officers, *mullas*, *ulema* of course, fanned the fire of bigotry. But the bloodshed, oppression and intolerance of the initial age of *jihad* after the Muslim conquest did not become permanent. Communal differences and inconsistencies are indicated in political history, and may be read into books on theory or law, and in some contemporary literary works. But due to the influence of the infallible force of Time an unprecedented and extraordinary change was effected in the social life of Bengal during five or five and a half centuries, indication of which is unavailable in books on ecclesiastical law and wholly wanting in historical chronicles.

The popular characteristics which Islam in India and especially in Bengal developed as a result of various forces, political, economic, social and religious, came to be regarded by orthodox reformers of the 18th and 19th centuries to be *Shirk* or vices of heresy, association with God, abuses or innovations in religion and the mode of performing religious duty and worship, which must be shunned by every true Muhammadan, as they constituted aberrations from orthodox Islam. The idea expressed in *Hidayatul Mominin* about Islam and Kufr being mixed up like *khichri* in India was also voiced by Sir Muhammad Iqbal. "Surely we have out-Hindued the Hindu himself; we are suffering from a double caste system—religious caste system, sectarianism and the social caste system which we have learned or inherited from the Hindus. This is one of the quiet ways in which the conquered nation revenged themselves on the conquerors".[185]

Hence reform movements started during the 18th century. The Wahhabi movement in Arabia influenced the *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* of Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi (1786-1831), with its call to a holy war (*jihad*) and the peaceful reform movement of the Faraizis in Bengal under Haji Shariat Allah (1781-1840) and Dadu Miyan (1819-62). But soon with the emergence of Titu Mir (1827-31) and Karamat Ali (1800-73) religious reform became a many-sided affair, social, economic, political and communal. The growing process of Hindu-Muslim assimilation during nearly six centuries and half received a setback. All this encouraged the growth of a spirit of socio-religious exclusiveness among the Muslims, which assumed a political colour in the next century.[186]

185. See my *Islam in Bengal*, 42-48; Hindustan Review quoted in census of India Report 1911/XIV (Punjab), pt. 1. p. 165.
186. *Islam in Bengal*, 48-75.

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ERRATA AND ADDENDA

Page	Line	Incorrect :	Correct :
4.	24	Khaldun	ibn Khaldun
6.	last	in Press	published September, 1984
7.	7	many being	many, being
15.	fn 15-17	Add : For geographical reasons or river changes, which facilitated conversions acc. to Dr. R.M. Eaton, Arizona Univ. U.S.A. *see* my *Thoughts on Trends of Cultural Contacts in Medieval India p. 40*	
17.	7	such voluntary	such a voluntary
	8	easily or for	easily for
	17	was of the	was the
	35	protector is	protector, is
18.	2	trickery	trickery,
20.	32	*Prachi*	*Prachin*
21.	29	on	or
22.	33	121	162
38.	30	*gnal*	*ngal*
39.	4	sultan	sultans
43.	14	*knmarbaod*	*kamarband*
44.	8	separation	separatism
48.	35	*Panduah*	Panduah
49.	8	Mnslim	Muslim
50.	f.n. 54	*In Press*	Published 1984
52.	4	her	their
56.	15	Barkhan	Bara Khan
56.	30	chatmahar	Chatmahar
57.	7, 11	*shirini*	*shirni*
58.	2	Muslim...Hindu	Muslim,...Hindu,
59.	f.n. 100	Add : *Jauhar* practice, instructed by a Mughal noble in case of death during war in Assam. *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi.*	
70.	25	Contemporary	contemporary
71.	22	andth e	and the
77.	18	century From	century. From
81.	21	*Bhagbvat*	*Bhagvat*
88.	f.n. 149	Throughts... (in press)	Thoughts... (published 1984)
101.	11	son	child
107.	f.n. 184	Yoga kalandar	*Yoga kalandar*